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ABSTRACT

This evaluation of the first-year elementary school implementation of Boston's pilot "controlled choice" student assignment plan found that very little had been accomplished in planning for school improvement and that future desegregation compliance hinges on key decisions about secondary and bilingual education, and the empowerment of administrators, school staff, and advisory councils. The controlled choice assignment plan gives parents the opportunity to indicate preferences for the schools their children will attend and also stimulates school improvement. The plan includes school improvement councils that advise the zone superintendent on the use of state and Federal funds to strengthen schools unable to attract applicants. The new student assignment process did not resegregate schools, as some had feared, despite problems with ambiguous language in the plan, too many white students assigned to kindergarten seats, and lack of an appeals process. Problems with parent information and recruitment were related to delays in decision-making by the superintendent and the school board and to insufficient clarity about which decisions should be made by zone superintendents. The potential for school improvement that is an implicit and essential part of a choice plan has been forestalled by the failure to link the results of parent choice with school-level improvement plans. The plan cannot be extended to high schools until issues concerning the location and size of bilingual programs and curriculum reforms have been decided. Statistical data are included on ten tables. (FMW)

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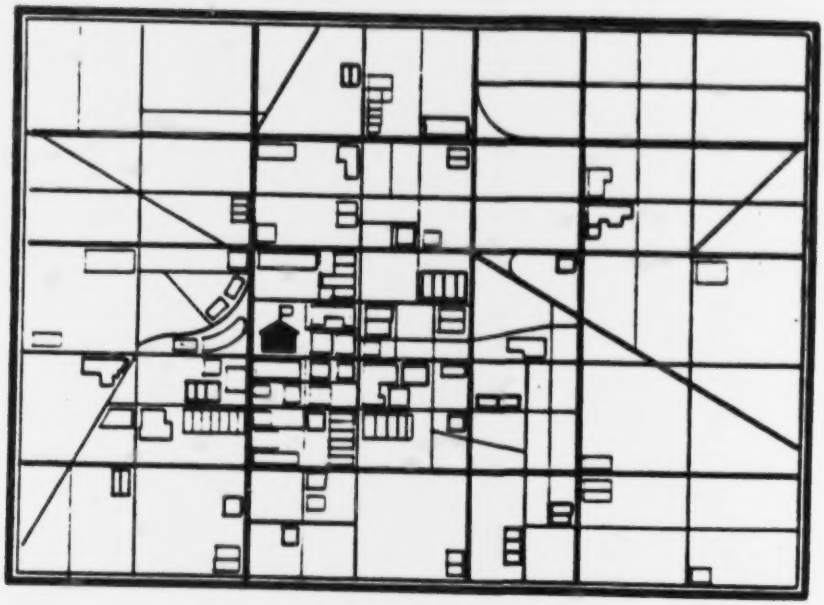

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April 6, 1990

TO: Harold Raynolds, Jr.
Commissioner of Education

FROM: Charles Glenn, Executive Director

Enclosed is the final version of my report on the first year of implementation (on a pilot basis) of Boston's "controlled choice" student assignment plan. This report includes an assessment, as of this date, of the readiness of the school system to implement controlled choice at all grade levels.

The report is organized under three headings: **desegregative student assignments, parent information, and school improvements related to the choice process.**

Information in the version of this report that was submitted to the Board of Education in March has been up-dated and in some cases corrected. In addition, the section on school improvement has been expanded by a brief discussion of the "school improvement plans" provided recently by the school system, and the section on the need for a comprehensive high school plan has been placed more explicitly in the context of our earlier report on equity in secondary education.

To reiterate the points I made to the Board in March:

* Despite implementation difficulties -- described in the report -- Boston is operating a "state of the art" assignment plan that can already serve as a model to other systems seeking to link desegregation to school improvement and parent involvement.

* The short-comings noted in Boston's school improvement efforts do not mean that no schools are going through significant change, but that there was, until recent weeks, no **strategy** to encourage and support such change; this is even clearer now that we have reviewed the "school improvement plans".

* What is most sorely needed, as Boston schools responds to the new freedom -- and the new demands -- created by choice is a commitment to **integration**: both **racial** and **programmatic**. Only as teachers work together and pupils learn together will the promise of desegregation be realised.

Pilot Implementation of Controlled Choice Assignments in Boston Elementary and Middle Schools in 1989

and

Assessment of Readiness for Full Implementation at all Grade Levels in 1990

by Charles L. Glenn
Executive Director

April 6th 1990

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Overview

THE ASSIGNMENT PLAN AND THE STATE

The desegregation plan implemented in Boston in September 1974 was developed for and ordered by the State Board of Education; Federal Judge W. Arthur Garrity adopted this plan as an initial remedy after his own finding of de jure segregation in the Boston public schools. The following year, Judge Garrity ordered implementation of a more extensive plan (described below) which remains in effect except as replaced on a pilot basis in certain grades by the controlled choice assignment plan adopted by the Boston School Committee in February 1989.

In May 1988 the School Department asked for a clarification of whether the Board's approval would be required before the 1975 assignment plan could be modified. Attorney Robert Blumenthal's response pointed out that

> it has long been the position of the State Board that it is required to approve any proposed student assignment plans, or modifications to existing approved plans, under the charge contained in [chapter 15, section 1G of the Massachusetts General Laws] that the State Board "see to it that all school committees comply with all laws relating to the operation of the public schools . .." As interpreted by the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court, this provision of state statute "would seem to include the State and Federal Constitutions . .." . . . This approval is particularly important if the school district plans to seek Chapter 636 funding, racial balance transportation reimbursements, and/or 90% reimbursement for school construction/renovation. In the past, Boston has received extensive funding under each of these provisions of [the state racial balance law], which identifies the existence of an approved racial balance plan as the basis for eligibility. [June 24, 1988]

On May 23rd 1989 the Board approved "for the 1989-90 school year" the controlled choice assignment plan that had been adopted by the School Committee on February 27th. The Board adopted a "timetable for the resolution of those issues for which (1) further planning is scheduled to take place, or (2) consensus had not been achieved" during negotiations among the parties in Boston's federal desegregation case.

The Board's support for pilot implementation of the controlled choice assignment plan, and its commitment to an on-going process of decision-making, were important elements in the approval, by Judge Garrity, of implementation in 1989. The Board's filing with the Court stated that its vote of May 23rd reflected "both a conclusion that implementation at entry elementary and middle school grades can go forward in September without creating racial segregation in the Boston schools, and a recognition that further planning and negotiations . . . must go forward in a timely manner, to make full implementation feasible in September 1990."

The Court's approval was given despite the opposition of the black Plaintiffs, the Hispanic Plaintiff-Intervenors, and the Citywide Parents Council, all of which expressed concerns that the school system was not sufficiently prepared to make implementation a success. Deficiencies were noted, by these parties, in the assignment controls, in parent information efforts, and in provisions for strengthening schools that were unlikely to be able to attract a desegregated enrollment on a voluntary basis.

These are the issues discussed in this report.

The Board directed the Department of Education to monitor implementation of the plan and efforts to resolve outstanding issues. As a result of this monitoring, Commissioner Raynolds wrote to Superintendent Wilson on October 25th expressing concern over delays in making decisions that were essential to the success of permanent implementation of a controlled choice assignment plan. He noted that "[t]he Board's approval of the pilot assignment plan was contingent upon these deadlines, and the satisfactory and timely completion of these tasks will be an important factor in the Board's position on a final plan."

In a report to the Board at its January 1990 meeting, staff pointed out that several critical planning and implementation deadlines had been missed. The plans for school improvement, due November 1, were not yet complete, nor were staffing and training for parent information. There was a danger that essential elements of the plan would not be in place for effective implementation for September 1990. Chairperson James Crain wrote to President Daniel Burke of the School Committee expressing the Board's

> intense disappointment over the delays that put effective implementation of further modifications [to the assignment plan] in jeopardy. . . failure of school officials to address these issues immediately may place the Board in

> the difficult position of withholding Boston's Chapter 636 monies and other discretionary education funds as well as withholding of approval of further modifications to Boston's current court-approved assignment plan. . . I . . sincerely hope that further delays do not compound the problems encountered to date in developing an equitable and educationally effective assignment process for Boston students. [January 26, 1990]

At its March 27th meeting, the Board will consider whether to approve, disapprove, or approve with conditions Boston's controlled choice assignment plan as modified by the School Committee in December 1989 and subsequently. The purpose of this report is to discuss the implementation of critical elements of the pilot plan last year, the proposed modifications, and the readiness of the School Department to go to full implementation in all grades for September 1990.

MAKING CONTROLLED CHOICE WORK

"Controlled choice" is a strategy for school desegregation which allows every parent to indicate preferences for the schools that his or her children will attend, and seeks to satisfy these preferences to the extent that racial guidelines and school capacities will allow. This approach to desegregation was first adopted in Cambridge a decade ago, and has since been implemented by other Massachusetts cities and by several large cities elsewhere in the United States.

Controlled choice is also a means of maximizing the impact of choice for school improvement and for educational diversity while taking care to avoid the negative side-effects upon poor and minority children often associated with unrestricted choice. It is thus part of a reform agenda advanced by -- among others -- the National Governors' Association, and should be distinguished from calls for unrestricted market forces in education.

The controlled choice assignment plan implemented in 1989 in Boston for certain grades on a pilot basis was both an attempt to reduce the role of mandatory assignments in meeting the desegregation obligations of the school system and also a means of stimulating school improvement. The plan made explicit reference to school improvement councils in each zone that would advise the zone superintendent on measures to strengthen those schools unable to attract a sufficient number of applicants, and on the use of state and federal funds to meet this goal.

Controlled choice will not work effectively without a process for informing and counselling parents about their options, and in particular for reaching out to those parents least likely to be active participants. The Department of Education has earmarked several million dollars in state funds for parent information centers in Boston and other desegregating communities and has developed guidelines for effective operation of such centers.

Assessment of the pilot implementation of controlled choice in Boston in 1989, and of preparations for its full implementation in 1990, must consider a number of issues arising out of the complex characteristics of a desegregation plan based upon choice. It is not enough, as it might be with a mandatory assignment plan, to consider only the statistical outcomes of new assignments. Judgments must also be made about the extent to which school improvement has been stimulated and parents -- especially poor and linguistic minority parents -- have been helped to take more effective responsibility for the education of their children.

This report covers the following topics:

Assignment Procedures and Results page 5

How successful was the controlled choice plan, as implemented, at maintaining or improving the level of desegregation achieved under the previous plan since 1975? Did the plan improve the ability of the school system to hold white pupils who might otherwise attend non-public schools? What assignment problems arose in implementation, and have they been corrected before full-scale implementation?

Parent Information and Recruitment page 23

Did parents receive timely and accurate information about the assignment process and the options available? Was adequate counselling provided to those seeking it and to all parents new to the system? Were parents who did not receive one of their choices reached and encouraged to consider alternatives? Did school staff participate actively in the parent information process? Were these services provided adequately to parents speaking languages other than English?

Has the School Department made appropriate decisions about the availability and placement of educational programs in support of desegregation and equity? Have the Zone School Improvement Councils and superintendents developed strategies to strengthen those schools that were not successful in attracting desegregative applications in 1989? Have staff of individual schools taken steps to increase the distinctiveness and the effectiveness of their offerings and to communicate this to prospective parents?

Under each heading, the report considers the school system's efforts and their results in 1989, and preparations for full implementation in 1990.

Assignment Procedures and Results

BEFORE 1989

From May 1975 until 1989 the Boston Public Schools assigned pupils to schools at all grade levels through a court-ordered plan combining voluntary and mandatory elements. The underlying structure was provided by a system of "geocodes" -- some eight hundred defined geographical areas developed originally as police reporting areas -- for school assignment purposes. For pupils resident in each geocode there was a designated elementary school, middle school, and high school. Combinations of geocodes were assigned to schools in a way calculated to achieve a desegregated enrollment in each school.

The Boston School Committee argued successfully, in 1975, for a separate, neighborhood-based assignment system for kindergartens, on the basis that attendance at kindergarten is not mandatory and therefore that kindergartens need not be desegregated; this had the effect that many pupils were assigned to one school for an all-white or all-black kindergarten and then to another for a desegregated first grade. This tended to reinforce the existing pattern of white pupils attending a Boston Public Schools kindergarten and then going on to first grade in a parochial or other non-public school.

Boston was divided into eight geographical districts, each with one or more high schools and a district superintendent with very limited authority at all grade levels. The desegregation goals for black, white, and other minority (mostly Hispanic and Asian) enrollment in each school in the district were set annually based upon the actual enrollment in school at that level (elementary, middle or high school) the previous year; since there was only a single high school in each district, desegregation compliance at that level was automatic! Several years ago, these were combined into four zones, though without effect upon assignments.

In addition to these "district" schools, the 1975 plan provided for a number of magnet schools, grouped into a ninth district and drawing pupils from the entire city. Eventually there were ten magnet elementary schools, three magnet middle schools (and several other quasi-magnets), and eight magnet high schools. Three of the latter had been citywide schools admitting pupils on the basis of a competitive examination since long before desegregation. Half of the high school pupils but a much smaller proportion of the elementary and middle school pupils attended magnet schools. Despite the strong popularity of the magnet elementary schools, in particular, the system was very reluctant to increase their number and they were perceived by many as undermining the reputation and effectiveness of the district schools.

The new plan adopted by the Boston School Committee in February 1989 for pilot implementation the following September was developed by two consultants employed by the Mayor. Charles Willie is a professor of sociology at Harvard Graduate School of Education and has frequently served as an expert witness in desegregation cases nationwide. Michael Alves was for more than a dozen years the project director for desegregation assistance in the Bureau of Equal Educational Opportunity (renamed in 1988, with an expanded policy role, the Office of Educational Equity), and thus had worked closely with me in relation to desegregation statewide.

The model used in developing the 1989 plan was "controlled choice," an approach to desegregation developed in Cambridge with assistance from Alves a decade ago and since implemented elsewhere in Massachusetts and nationwide. The term itself was coined by Alves and me some years ago to stress the importance of subjecting parent choice to controls that would assure equity and educational improvement for all pupils.

Under controlled choice, no school has a geographical attendance area and all pupils new to the system (or moving

to a higher level of schooling) are assigned on the basis of an expression of preference by their parents, subject to guidelines designed to achieve racial desegregation. The new method of assigning pupils was approved for implementation in Boston at pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, grade 1, and grade 6 for September 1989.

The city was divided into three geographical zones for assignments to elementary and middle schools. The entire city became a fourth zone for high schools. The four zone superintendents were to have substantially increased authority over the schools in their zones and, together with newly-formed Zone Improvement Councils, over all discretionary funding to strengthen those schools unable to attract a desegregated enrollment on a voluntary basis.

The process was explained as follows to parents:

> Students who are now in the Boston Public Schools will bring Application Forms home for parents to fill out. On the form will be all the schools in the zone. Parents will be asked to "rank order" as many schools as they'd like to choose, picking one school as their first choice (#1), another as their second choice (#2), etc.
>
> Parents who do not have children in the Boston Public Schools or who are registering a K-1 [pre-kindergarten] student for the first time will be able to do so at one of the Parent Information Centers located in the Zone Offices.

Pupils already attending a school were guaranteed ("grandfathered") to remain in the school for the following grade (if available). An exception was those pupils attending kindergartens in their neighborhood schools who would have been required, as noted above, to attend another school for a desegregated first grade; these pupils would have to go through the application process.

The desire of many (mostly white) parents to use the Boston Public Schools only for kindergarten was accommodated by designating certain kindergarten seats as "temporary" and exempting them from desegregation requirements. Assignment to one of these seats did not constitute a claim to remain in the school for first grade. On the other hand, parents intending to remain with the public schools found it burdensome that their children could not (apart from the ten magnet elementary schools) necessarily "lock into" a school beginning in kindergarten.

Under the new plan, seats in all extended-day kindergartens

were made "permanent": that is, subject to desegregation guidelines and carrying with them an entitlement to remain in the school for elementary grades. Of half-day kindergarten seats, some were designated as permanent and others as "temporary," with the idea that the latter would accommodate those pupils whose parents intended to send them to non-public schools for first grade. The distinction was lost on most parents, and kindergarten assignments would be a major weak point of the implementation of the plan.

Desegregation in grades 1 and 6, and in permanent kindergarten seats, was to be accomplished by assigning no more pupils of each racial/ethnic category than were projected for the zone, plus or minus ten percentage points.

DESEGREGATION ACCOMPLISHMENTS

My analysis dated November 13, 1989 compared the enrollment of each school's first or sixth grade, and how this deviated from the racial proportions of its zone, as of November 1st 1989 and 1988. Had schools become more racially segregated as a result of the expansion of parent choice?

Despite problems with assignment procedures (described below), the net effect of controlled choice in Boston has <u>not</u> been to resegregate schools; more schools became more desegregated than became more segregated.

The first grades of six elementary schools out of 75, three of them in the West Zone and three in the North Zone, became significantly (at least 10 percentage points) more deviant from the zone-wide average. The sixth grades in two middle schools out of 22, one in each of those zones, became significantly more deviant from the zone-wide average. These eight schools, then, became more segregated at the entry grades than they were the previous year.

By the same standard, however, first grades of eight elementary schools became significantly closer to the zone-wide average, and the same was true of the sixth grades of four middle schools. There were thus twelve schools that became more desegregated as a result of controlled choice.

The average deviation of the first grades of all elementary schools from the minority proportion of their respective zones was 11.18 percentage points in November 1988 and 10.65 percentage points in November 1989. Corresponding deviations for sixth grades dropped from 10.91 percentage points in 1988 to 9.27 percentage points in 1989. Given the

problems that arose with assignments in July, we can take this as a positive sign that the Boston schools will become more desegregated if controlled choice continues to operate in the future.

These results were accomplished with a relatively low proportion of mandatory assignments, a major gain for the controlled choice strategy. In a September 25 analysis of the first and second round of assignments, made over the summer, I found that the majority had been to the first choice schools, and only a few had been strictly involuntary.

KINDERGARTEN

LEVEL	BASIS	BLACK		WHITE		OTHER	
K1	FIRST CHOICE	534	66%	572	60%	418	68%
	2ND CHOICE	109	13%	211	22%	109	18%
	3ND CHOICE	35	4%	33	3%	29	5%
	4TH CHOICE	18	2%	23	2%	3	0%
	5TH CHOICE	10	1%	9	1%	0	0%
	SPECIAL ED	101	12%	71	7%	51	8%
	NON-PROMOTE	1	0%	0	0%	0	0%
	INVOLUNTARY	**3**	**0%**	**22**	**2%**	**2**	**0%**
K2	FIRST CHOICE	1,317	80%	1,127	81%	822	78%
	2ND CHOICE	125	8%	120	9%	133	13%
	3ND CHOICE	49	3%	31	2%	19	2%
	4TH CHOICE	26	2%	12	1%	14	1%
	5TH CHOICE	9	1%	7	1%	3	0%
	SPECIAL ED	110	7%	73	5%	44	4%
	NON-PROMOTE	6	0%	9	1%	4	0%
	INVOLUNTARY	**2**	**0%**	**18**	**1%**	**5**	**0%**

The School Department decided that, since kindergarten attendance is not mandatory, pupils would not be assigned to kindergartens which their parents had not requested. This accounts for the low number of involuntary assignments, and also for the large number of pupils of kindergarten age who were not assigned to any school as of the end of August.

In contrast with kindergarten-age pupils, all first grade pupils were given assignments whether their choices could be accommodated or not. For a significant number of black and other minority pupils, this assignment was unfortunately a retention in first grade on the basis of a decision made in the school.

FIRST GRADE

BASIS	BLACK		WHITE		OTHER	
FIRST CHOICE	1,445	60%	866	62%	1,013	71%
2ND CHOICE	98	4%	42	3%	56	4%
3ND CHOICE	20	1%	18	1%	8	1%
4TH CHOICE	21	1%	11	1%	4	0%
5TH CHOICE	4	0%	6	0%	0	0%
SPECIAL ED	140	6%	86	6%	73	5%
NON-PROMOTE	428	18%	99	7%	213	15%
INVOLUNTARY	**231**	**10%**	**222**	**16%**	**54**	**4%**

Fewer than 10 percent of the pupils assigned to first grade received involuntary assignments; the proportion was especially low among other minority pupils. This finding is important in view of the statement published in the La Raza national newsletter several months earlier, that linguistic minority parents had less choice than other parents under Boston's controlled choice plan.

SIXTH GRADE

BASIS	BLACK		WHITE		OTHER	
FIRST CHOICE	1,151	58%	512	61%	785	62%
2ND CHOICE	199	10%	59	7%	91	7%
3ND CHOICE	66	3%	22	3%	22	2%
4TH CHOICE	21	1%	5	1%	5	0%
5TH CHOICE	8	0%	1	0%	6	0%
SPECIAL ED	132	7%	59	7%	83	7%
NON-PROMOTE	140	7%	56	7%	83	7%
INVOLUNTARY	**279**	**14%**	**123**	**15%**	**171**	**14%**

The rate of involuntary assignments is higher for sixth graders than for first graders, though it remains below 15 percent. This rate was presumably affected by the closing of the Mackey and Holmes middle schools, and the intermediate grades of the Umana school, over the course of the summer.

As with first graders, other minority sixth graders were more likely to receive their first choice assignment than were their black and white peers.

The most popular middle schools were not necessarily former magnet schools. Particularly notable was the large number of applicants from all groups for two non-magnet middle

schools located in heavily-minority areas, the Timilty and the Lewenberg.

Involuntary (or "administrative") assignments were not evenly distributed among schools. The more popular schools required no assignments that parents had not asked for, while others required a substantial proportion of involuntary assignments of one racial/ethnic group, and yet others required involuntary assignments from all groups.

Another way of assessing the success of this desegregation strategy is to compare the proportion of assigned pupils who actually reported for school with the previous year of mandatory assignments. Traditionally, a large number of white pupils have attended Boston public kindergartens but then gone on to non-public schools for first grade. One of the effects of controlled choice in Cambridge has been to increase the proportion of school-age children resident in the community who attend the public schools, and proponents have suggested that expanded choice in Boston would have the same effect.

While it is not possible to conclude much from the first year of controlled choice in Boston -- accompanied as it was by much confusion and without school-level program development (see below) — there is evidence that fewer assigned pupils failed to report to school in 1989. There were 497 pupils assigned to first grade as of October 1, 1989 who were not attending as of November 1, representing 9% of the black, 17% of the white, and 9% of the other minority pupils originally assigned. Last year, by comparison, there were 556 pupils assigned to first grade October 1 who were not attending as of November 1. The drop-off in 1988 represented 10% of the black, 19.5% of the white, and 11% of the other minority pupils.

This suggests that controlled choice had some -- though not enough -- positive effect on the willingness of parents of all racial/ethnic categories to stay with the Boston Public Schools for first grade.

The new method of making desegregative assignments was at least moderately successful, then, on three measures: the extent to which the pilot grades were desegregated, the proportion of parents receiving the assignments they requested for their children, and the ability of the schools to hold their assigned pupils.

These successes were achieved despite a number of implementation problems, most of which have been corrected to some extent for 1990. Some of these problems had to do with

the assignment process itself, while others will be discussed under parent information and school improvement.

PROBLEMS WITH THE ASSIGNMENT PROCESS

While, in general, the actual mechanics of the assignment process worked quite well, there were several problems that had an effect on general perceptions of the success of the new controlled choice plan. During the first stage of assignments nearly nine hundred kindergarten applications were electronically "misplaced," leading to short-term confusion and additional pressure upon those involved in making the process work.

Far more serious in its effects was the School Committee's decision, in July, to close a number of schools as a cost-saving measure. Since this decision was promptly challenged in court, it was necessary for the Department of Implementation to organize an additional round of applications and to hold up final decisions on other assignments in order to assure that pupils displaced from the closing schools would have an equal chance for preferred options. "Grace under pressure" was never more evident!

Another problem in the first round of assignments arose from a conflict in how to interpret ambiguous language in the assignment plan about the impact of "grandfathered" pupils. The School Department insisted that it was the intention of the plan that these pupils not be counted in determining desegregation compliance, and thus -- for example -- additional white pupils could be assigned to the first grade in a school where the number of "grandfathered" white pupils continuing from kindergarten already exceeded the white enrollment allowed by the plan.

The State, with the support of the authors of the assignment plan, insisted that this was not the intention of the plan, while conceding that the language of the plan could be interpreted to support the School Department's position. The upshot was that the over-assignment of white or minority pupils to some first grades was compounded by the first round of assignments, leaving fewer pupils of those groups available for assignment to schools where they were under-assigned. The School Committee amended the plan on July 25th "to clarify that grandfathered students will be included in calculating the ideal racial percentages . .." Thus in the second round of assignments, and in 1990, this will not be an issue.

Another problem with the 1989 assignments will cause minor problems for desegregation compliance in September 1990: too many pupils of a particular racial/ethnic group -- in almost every case white -- were assigned to "permanent" kindergarten seats in eleven schools, with the result that there will be an excess of pupils of that group in the first grade next year, based upon its planned capacity and the desegregation goals. Altogether, there are 53 white pupils, 5 black pupils and 2 other minority kindergartners who will be grandfathered in this way. In theory this should not have happened in the second year of implementation, but it appears to be a result of the initial over-capacity of first grades system-wide; this was reduced through eliminating a number of first grades but not a corresponding number of permanent kindergarten seats in the same schools.

Development, in February, of a detailed manual for the assignment process (discussed, below, under parent information) answers a need for clarity that was often expressed during the pilot implementation phase. Issues addressed in these guidelines -- after discussion with the parties -- include:

- giving bilingual education pupils the right to mainstream into their present school rather than requiring that they re-enter the assignment process; pupils transferring out of bilingual programs prior to official mainstreaming will be allowed to remain in the same school if space permits

- phasing in integrated special education/regular education programming at additional schools

- pupils who do not receive any of their choices in the first round of assignments will not be assigned to any school; they will be given a chance to make a different selection in the second round, and assigned involuntarily if this does not result in a voluntary assignment

- up to half of the seats in the entry grade of a school designated for a racial/ethnic group will be assigned on a priority basis to applicants living within the "walk zone" of the school

- special assignment procedures will be developed for applicants to two-way and integrated bilingual programs, to assure that pupils admitted to the more advanced grades are sufficiently proficient in both languages to benefit from the instruction

The State recommended a number of simplifications of the assignment process, particularly with a view to reducing the

number of parents of pupils in non-transition grades (1-4, 6-7, 9-11) in 1989-90 who seek a different school for 1990-91. While all pupils have a right to seek such transfers, it seemed appropriate to reduce the prospect of thousands of parents applying for the most popular schools, whose non-transition grades have very few vacancies. The Department of Implementation responded only partially to these suggestions, sending out a mailing to parents of pupils with a right to remain in the same school asking whether they would want to seek a transfer, as a means of reducing the number of applicants to manageable proportions.

An issue not resolved by the procedural manual is the handling of appeals from the results of the assignment process. According to the assignment plan as developed by Willie and Alves and approved by the School Committee in February 1989, there was to be a hardship appeals board, but this provision was removed at the urging of the Citywide Parents Council and the [bilingual education] Master PAC, and the procedural manual limits appeals to the senior manager of the Department of Implementation.

SETTING DESEGREGATION GOALS

Superintendent Wilson was persuaded by the Hispanic Plaintiff-Intervenors that pupils enrolled in bilingual programs should not be counted in determining the desegregation goals; the State warned that this could have the effect of encouraging very large bilingual programs and discouraging the integration of language minority pupils.

Substantially-separate special education pupils were to be counted in determining desegregation compliance in the schools they attended.

In the negotiations over a permanent plan, in 1990, the State did not press its earlier position, preferring to deal with the issues in the context of planning for bilingual education in general (see below). All parties accepted the School Committee's decision not to count substantially-separate special education pupils as well.

During the 1989 negotiations prior to approval of pilot implementation, the State took the position that the desegregation goals for each of the pilot grades -- kindergarten, first and sixth grade -- should be set based upon current enrollments of each of those grades. The City called for using instead the average of grades pre k-8, and

the School Committee ultimately settled upon a figure including some but not all kindergartners.

While this may seem a minor issue, it is significant for the delicately-balanced functioning of a controlled choice plan. In Boston, the proportion of white pupils is significantly higher in kindergarten than in the elementary grades, because of pupils who go on non-public schools, and the proportion of white pupils is lower still in middle schools (grades 6-8) because a disproportionate number are admitted to the examination high schools at grade 7.

If the "ideal" enrollment proportion of white pupils for sixth grade, for example, is set higher than the actual proportion of white pupils available for assignment to middle schools, the result will be that schools in white areas will be able to enroll a disproportionate share of the white pupils available, leaving an insufficient number for assignment to other schools. This, in turn, would lead to the resegregation of schools that had been desegregated under the system of assignments based upon residence.

The State's prediction that the "ideal" white enrollment was being set too high was borne out when actual enrollments for each zone were analyzed in November; the discrepancy in the West Zone was as high as five percentage points, that in the North Zone four, while the "ideal" enrollment in the East Zone was only one percentage point off the actual enrollment.

The effect of setting the "ideal" white proportion higher than the actual proportion of white pupils among those available for assignment works in reinforces a second problem, that of inaccurate capacities.

SETTING CAPACITIES

Controlled choice depends, for its desegregative effect, upon a careful calculation of the number of seats that will be made available for each racial/ethnic group in each zone and thus in each school. If capacities are set accurately enough to reflect the number of pupils of each group available for assignment, each school is guaranteed to receive an appropriately desegregated enrollment. If, on the other hand, there is excess capacity for white pupils (for example) in a zone, then too many of those available for assignment will be assigned to schools in white neighborhoods, and an insufficient number will be available for assignment to schools in minority neighborhoods. This will have the effect of resegregating schools.

The need to set exact capacities for each grade level in each zone was stressed in the assignment plan and also in testimony in court before implementation of the plan was approved, but this elemental step was not taking with enough care before the first round of assignments. Thus my memorandum of June 26 pointed out that

> Much attention has focused on the error made in forgetting to process nearly nine hundred kindergarten applications. While this was a serious interruption to the process, in my view it is far less serious than the mishandling of the capacities and thus both the "ideal" number of pupils of each racial/ethnic group to assign to each school, and the total (ideal plus 10 percentage points) who may be assigned.
>
> According to the print-out provided by Dr. Ellison on Thursday, 4,619 seats have been set aside for sixth graders in all programs, although current fifth grade enrollment is 3,864, indicating that up to 755 excess seats may have been designated. Current sixth grade enrollment is 3,833. As my testimony in court pointed out, excess capacity will cause serious problems under a controlled choice plan, and yet here we have a 20% excess only weeks later!
>
> The argument for lifting restrictions on "sending schools" was that desegregation would be assured by not allowing excess capacity in any zone. If capacities are "loose," it is likely that nearly all white pupils, for example, will be accommodated in schools in white residential areas, leaving few available for assignment to other schools.
>
> The excess capacity at the sixth grade level . . . could have very serious results for compliance and thus for the prospects of full implementation of the plan next year.
>
> At the first grade level the total capacity designated (6,261) is 28% higher than the present enrollment in first grade (4,910) -- 67% higher than the present white enrollment (1,609 versus 964)!
>
> If the present k2 is taken as the potential pool of first graders (assuming that the new assignment plan will keep more white children in the system), the first grade capacity designated for white pupils is 11% higher. Thus even if all the white pupils in k2 continued on to first grade -- which is extremely unlikely -- the capacity would still be too high. Taking all racial/ethnic groups

together, the designated capacity for first graders is 41% higher than the present k2 enrollment.

Before the second round of assignments is made, in a couple of weeks, it is critically important that the capacities be fixed. It may, for example, be possible to correct to some extent the over-capacity at the sixth grade level by assigning no more than the ideal number to any school, without permitting the extra ten percentage point range.

After reviewing the data with School Department staff, it became clear that much of the excess capacity was being held for expansion of special education assignments (already very high in Boston), but that there was also a need for elimination of a significant number of kindergarten, first grade and sixth grade classes. As I wrote on June 28,

Even with the new information you provided yesterday, it seems clear that at least 12 sixth grade classes should be eliminated. I assume that as many or more first grades, and some number of kindergartens, should be dropped in order to prevent resegregation as a result of the new assignments. My suggestion is that schools to which you have already assigned a full desegregated enrollment be left untouched and other schools be reviewed for possible elimination of classes.

The School Department did then eliminate excess first and sixth grade classes in more than a dozen schools, and this had a positive effect upon the second round of assignments.

Unfortunately, there were already at this point approximately ten elementary schools to which too many white first graders had been assigned -- leaving too few available for assignment to other schools. The same was true of sixth grades in middle schools. My analysis found

considerable excess capacity for white pupils . .. There are simply not enough white pupils to reach the desegregation goal in every sixth grade, even if all those in the pool were assigned to the schools to which the fewest were assigned in the first round.

My analysis of November 1 enrollments noted the effects of how the desegregation goals and the capacities were set:

During the first round of assignments, the plan was interpreted in a way which resulted in assigning too many white pupils or too many minority pupils to certain schools. While the procedure was corrected after

objections by the State, we agreed that pupils who had received incorrect assignments should not be reassigned. This has the result that, for example, the Condon, Perkins, Perry and Tynan schools have an excessive white enrollment in first grade -- and that not enough white pupils were available to meet the desegregation goals in certain other schools.

These problems were compounded by a decision, by the School Committee (with the strong encouragement of the City) not to establish a restriction on pupil transfers that had a negative effect upon the sending school.

RESTRICTIONS ON TRANSFERS

The proposal to operate without controls on sending schools -- a change from the procedures in effect under the previous desegregation plan -- was opposed by the Plaintiffs and the State as inconsistent with enrollment stability in schools which, at least initially, would experience difficulty in attracting a desegregated enrollment.

The Plaintiffs charged, on February 13th 1989, that "[a]llowing white students to leave the schools with the highest proportions of black and other minority students, without controls, would constitute an open enrollment mechanism improperly promoting segregation." The School Department and the City insisted that the plan did not require such controls. On March 7th, I noted that "[t]o take no account of impact on the sending school in processing assignments could lead to resegregation. It is important to work out a flexible approach that would place the emphasis on the net effect of transfers, not on rigid rules for individual cases."

To respond to these concerns, the School Committee added to the assignment plan provision for a three-person commission, representing themselves, the Plaintiffs, and the State [subsequently expanded to include the City], to review the actual working of such transfers during the pilot phase of the plan, and to make recommendations for the phase of full implementation.

If the desegregation goals and the capacities had been set accurately, as discussed above, it would have been less necessary to be concerned with transfer restrictions. If each school can enroll only its "fair share" of the white and minority pupils available for assignment, then no other

school can be resegregated in the process. But if schools in white neighborhoods, for example, can enroll a disproportionate share of white pupils, then allowing these pupils to transfer out of schools in minority neighborhoods -- not an option under the mandatory assignment plan — will tend to destabilize the enrollment of the latter. As my June 24th analysis noted,

> [t]he argument for lifting restrictions on "sending schools" was that desegregation would be assured by not allowing excess capacity in any zone. If capacities are "loose," it is likely that nearly all white pupils, for example, will be accommodated in schools in white residential areas, leaving few available for assignment to other schools.

After a number of commission meetings and detailed analysis of data, the representatives of the Plaintiffs and the State concluded that the effect of allowing transfers without attention to their impact upon the sending school had had a sufficiently negative effective that it should not be allowed to continue for 1990. The representatives of the School Department and the City concluded that the negative impact had been minimal and that there should be another year of experiment without restrictions.

Disagreement was not about the facts, but about their significance. From the perspective of the School Department and the City, there were only 44 transfers of white first or sixth graders that would have been denied by a policy forbidding such transfers if the sending school was below the permitted desegregated range. On the other hand, eleven elementary schools and seven middle schools were identified whose white enrollment at first or sixth grade was more than ten percentage points (the permitted range) below the desegregation goal for the zone, and from which one or more white pupils had been permitted to transfer out. The Mendell school, for example, was originally assigned two white pupils for first grade, but both were allowed to transfer out; the Wheatley lost six white sixth graders through transfers, leaving only five out of 104 in that grade.

The position taken by the Plaintiffs in December was that

> [a] transfer from the waiting list should not be permitted when the proportion of the transferring student's group in the sending school's actual enrollment is already below the minimum racial parameter of the plan (or will be brought below that parameter by the transfer).

The position taken by the State was that, given the serious delays in planning and implementing school improvements in those schools that had difficulty attracting and retaining white pupils in 1989, these schools would require a protection against further resegregation in 1990. Such protection could be provided, in part, by denying transfer requests that would bring the schools below the permitted white enrollment range. The State was prepared to acknowledge that at some time in the future, with effective school improvement measures (and more accurate capacities than were set initially in 1989), it would be possible to rely upon controls at the receiving schools alone to maintain desegregation.

A related issue was the provision that pupils be placed automatically on the waiting lists for their first and second choices if they did not receive one of these schools in the first or second round of assignments. The State objected to this during the first set of negotiations as tending to destabilize "vulnerable" schools. In the March 7th 1989 memo mentioned above, I wrote that "[t]o put students automatically on the waiting list, rather than providing an opportunity to be on the list, would tend to promote enrollment instability and get in the way of the effort of a school to form a bond with students and parents assigned involuntarily. Requesting a transfer should be made simple but not automatic."

Problems created by the automatic waiting list -- which including transfers offered and carried out several months into the school year -- were mentioned in our discussions with zone superintendents and principals. Several of the "school improvement plans" developed at the end of January 1990 stressed the negative impact of the transfer procedures. To have parent information and assignment staff calling hundreds of parents who have never requested a transfer, well after the school year has begun, to ask whether they want a different school, makes no sense.

When assignments procedures were developed for high schools by Zone Superintendent Michael Fung, the automatic placement on a waiting list was not included; parents or students will have to apply for a transfer if not satisfied with their originally-assigned schools. At present (April 6th 1990), then, waiting lists for high schools will function under different rules than will those for elementary and middle schools.

The only modification of the waiting list procedures for grades K-8 have been modified slightly by providing that parents who receive their third choices (not just, as last

year, their first or second choices) will not be placed automatically on a waiting list. In theory, this should reduce the size of the waiting lists, but in fact the impact will probably be minimal. Last year, only 2 percent of the K2 pupils were assigned to third-choice schools, as were 1 percent of the first graders and 2 percent of the sixth graders.

With the extension of controlled choice to all grade levels (not just the "entry grades") in 1990, the danger exists that the parents of many pupils who have already attended a school for several years will seek a transfer to a school near where they live. This could result in resegregation of a number of schools, and we have stressed the importance of setting capacity limits for all grade levels for which transfers will be allowed.

We continue to believe that the waiting list procedure adopted for high school waiting lists should be applied at all levels, and that transfers should not be permitted if they will have the effect of resegregating the school to which pupils are originally assigned.

SUMMARY

As in the past, Boston's student assignment process -- considered in isolation from other, equally important aspects of desegregation -- functioned quite well in 1989.

Most notably, there have been no allegations that the process was manipulated by individuals to gain an unfair advantage, or that it was subject to political influence. This in itself is no small accomplishment, and that fact that it has not been remarked upon is a tribute to the style set for the Department of Implementation by the late John Coakley and continued by Catherine Ellison and her associates. The DI was guided through extremely complex changes in its approach to desegregation by the temporary controlled choice unit consisting of Clarence Hoover and John Halloran, who reported directly to the Superintendent.

Throughout nearly a year of intensive and undoubtedly intrusive monitoring of controlled choice implementation, I never had a sense that these two units of the School Department were less than candid about problems and decisions -- at least when I had the sense to ask the right questions!

This is not to praise the process unreservedly. There were several procedural "glitches," noted above, and the

decisions, by the Superintendent and School Committee, to refuse desegregative controls on sending schools and to set assignment goals based upon K-8 averages have resulted in less desegregation than would otherwise have been accomplished.

Realistic capacities for first and sixth grades should have been set before the process began; it seems likely that this, as a decision with programmatic implications, was not entirely within the control of the DI. We have been assured that this aspect of the assignment process has been dealt with more effectively this year, though the space matrix for schools has not yet been provided to the parties.

That the new assignment plan was only a partial success is attributable to problems in implementing parent information and school improvements, the result of inadequate decentralization of responsibility and authority to the zones.

Parent Information and Recruitment

THE KEY TO EQUAL ACCESS

Great stress was given, in the plan developed by consultants Willie and Alves, to the importance of an effective parent information effort. This was based upon experience with other Massachusetts cities implementing controlled choice, and was a priority for the use of state desegregation funds. The School Committee voted unanimously, on February 27, that parent information centers should be set up "as soon as possible," and the state supplemented its funding of district office efforts to provide parent information with an additional $70,000 for costs related to beginning to implement the new plan. For the 1989-90 school year, the State committed $850,000 to the parent information effort.

This was by no means the first time that the State urged the Boston Public Schools to develop a more effective approach to reaching out to parents in order to encourage desegregative choices. In the series of reports prepared for the Federal District Court, in the early eighties, the State pointed out repeatedly that Boston was relying exclusively upon assignment mechanisms rather than seeking to recruit pupils through a stress on the quality and diversity of educational offerings. Early in the 1986-86 school year the State provided funding for a recruitment specialist to work with

the Department of Implementation; by the following April the position had still not been filled. Several modifications of the geocode-based assignment plan that were intended to provide greater flexibility for schools to reach out to prospective pupils had little effect; the change of habits seemed too difficult.

Convictions about the broader significance of the parent information process differed within the School Department. As early as March 1989 Zone Superintendent Diana Lam (since appointed as Superintendent in Chelsea) pointed out that

> [t]his is a significantly enhanced and different role than has ever been played by any current Parent Information Center or existing organization funded by BPS. . . We propose a user-friendly Center which takes advantage of special opportunities such as registration, school choice, routine transportation questions, and parents' need for information in dynamic ways to intervene in strengthening parents' capacities to support their children's learning efforts. . . . the Center's design should be more like that of a multi-service community center where programs, constituencies, and needs overlap with one another and where "consumers" who come for one purpose see and are engaged by other processes which draw them back to the center again and again. Center staff should be trained in communication and engagement skills and have multi-lingual coverage . .. Additionally, the Parent Center staff will see outreach as an integral part of their jobs and will frequently go out to the community in a range of ways. . . [The PIC] can function both as a center at which services and resources are offered and as a base from which home visits and other home-based intervention efforts originate . . [and] . . provide specific kinds of training and technical support to parent groups. . . Since many teachers and principals have little experience welcoming and valuing parents as full partners, the Parent Center will need to serve as an ongoing "institutional advocate" for the legitimacy of parents' meaningful and full participation.

These extracts do not do justice to this visionary yet practical blueprint; unfortunately, none of the PICs has yet developed either the depth or the breadth of service suggested by Lam. Although each of the zone superintendents sees her/his PIC as an important aspect of zone operations, the decisions made by the School Committee and the Central Office have frequently underestimated their potential. The most recent issue, discussed below, is that of kindergarten registrations. During this year's "90-day process," the State urged that any parent seeking a transfer at a non-

transition grade be required to apply through a PIC rather than by mail, in order to assure that accurate counselling was provided; this recommendation was ignored.

It is not clear whether all quarters in the Boston Public Schools share the State's conviction of the importance of seeking to assure that parents receive individual counselling about their options. In a recent response to the State's position that "the centers are not adjuncts, but critical elements in the choice process. Parents trying to get information about the range of school choices available should be going to parent information centers first," the system's Director of Research argued that this was contrary to the principle of choice itself. Parents, she wrote, should have "control over how they go about obtaining information and the number of choices they make." While that is certainly true in the abstract, it remains equally true that special efforts are needed to overcome the information deficit of poor parents by contrast with middle class parents, and that individual counselling through a face-to-face parent information process is the most likely means to accomplish this.

In the complexity of modern life, unequal access to information is one of the key elements in the perpetuation of unequal access to opportunities and full participation. Critics of parent choice of schools frequently argue that it will work inequitably because poor parents lack information and skills in using it to make sound choices. Parent Information Centers, if they function as envisaged by Diana Lam and by the State's guidelines, are thus an essential element in a strategy of using controlled choice to advance educational equity. They can play this role only if they are built into the process by which parents make decisions.

INFORMATION TO LANGUAGE MINORITY GROUPS

The Hispanic Office of Planning and Evaluation and other groups stressed the importance of assuring that the parent information centers would be able to provide counselling in the languages of parents, and that all materials be distributed in those languages.

Each of the zone offices is staffed by bilingual coordinators to work with programs in schools and with the parent involvement structure culminating in the Master PAC. These bilingual staff members have inevitably been drawn into the parent information and registration process, sometimes to the

detriment of their other responsibilities.

Despite some delays caused by the difficulty of working with external contractors for translations, the various materials were eventually distributed in ten languages.

Printed material may not be a very effective way of communicating with Boston's linguistic minority groups, given the many parents who have limited literacy in their native languages -- especially in relation to the organizational terms of American education. The State agreed to fund the cost of translating and printing individual school profiles, but suggested that the funds might be better used through employing part-time outreach workers or producing audio tapes in the various languages to distribute to community and religious organization and to play over telephone access lines.

In the handbook sent out to all parents (in the various languages) in March 1990, the addresses and telephone numbers of various Hispanic organizations were included, but the School Department did not work with these groups to assure that they would be able to answer the concerns of parents.

A multi-lingual survey was conducted by the School Department in December 1989 as part of the required evaluation of the State-funded parent information process. The response rate varied from 39% for those sent out in Chinese and 30% for those in Vietnamese to 23% for those in Spanish and 21% for those in English. Only 7% of the Greek and 9% of the Cape Verdean surveys were returned. Altogether 1,630 surveys were returned, 480 of which were in languages other than English, out of 7696 distributed.

The Hispanic and Asian respondents, as might be expected, were less likely than others to report that they learned about the new assignment plan from the media, but it seems significant that they were as likely as black and white respondents to report that they had received information from the PICs, and that the registration procedures were clear to them. They were slightly less likely to have visited a PIC last Spring (24.4% of all groups with children entering first grade, and 25.9% with children entering sixth grade had done so), and somewhat more likely to report that the school attended by their child was what they had expected it to be (80% of all groups with children entering first grade and 75% with children entering sixth grade found the school what they expected).

Based on the survey, then, it does not appear that Hispanic and Asian parents were less well served by the parent

information process than were black and white parents. The responses of Haitian, Cape Verdean, Italian and other linguistic minority parents, unfortunately, are concealed within the categories "black" and "white," but there is no evidence that their responses would be markedly different.

INDIVIDUAL COUNSELLING

Printed information alone is never adequate under a controlled choice assignment plan. Quite apart from the issue of limited literacy among urban parents, the nature of the choice process is such that, for many, it must be individualized to meet their particular circumstances.

As early as May 30, after reviewing the first round of applications and before assignments were issued, I warned that

> [t]he parent information centers will need to be prepared to offer very specific counsel to the parents of up to 300 presently-enrolled fifth graders -- and a smaller number of pupils new to the system -- who will not receive their first or second preferences for sixth grade, and to a similar group at primary level. Many, of course, may be satisfied with receiving their third or fourth preference; others will want to remain on the waiting list or to make new selections for the second round of applications in July.
>
> In addition there are hundreds of pupils whose parents did not return an application, and they will need to be sought out and counselled about their options.

Such a counselling function -- with its implications of making judgments about the suitability of different schools for different pupils -- requires a major shift of emphasis from the role of district parent information staff before adoption of the controlled choice assignment plan. Visits to the centers in March 1989 found them focused largely upon disseminating information about school and zone activities, most of them supplemental to the central educational mission of the schools, and on organizing workshops for parents on a variety of useful topics. Staff produced newsletters and in other ways sought to convey positive messages about the schools, but they had in general no role in the process by which pupils ended up at particular schools. The exceptions were the citywide magnet district, and a section of the city where an experimental choice program had been operating.

In the staff memo recommending Board approval of the controlled choice assignment plan for September 1989, we stressed that

> [p]arent information this Spring has consisted largely of a variety of printed materials, in various languages, and of several public meetings. Valuable as such efforts are, they must be supplemented by individual counselling of parents as they make their selections, and by outreach from those schools that need to attract additional applications. . . . The parent information centers and schools will need to reach out to parents whose preferences could not be honored, and encourage them to look at other alternatives. This will be a new role for many School Department staff who have been used to receiving pupils assigned automatically because of where they lived. [5/16/89]

In October a meeting, organized by the State moniters, gave zone and Central Office staff a chance to discuss how the parent information and assignment process could be improved. One of the strong recommendations was that better provision be made for individual counselling, based on the assumption that 15-20 minutes would be needed for each parent, and that a modicum of privacy was essential to this process.

There was still some uncertainty, at this point, over the extent to which the Department of Implementation staff assigned to PICs were members of the PIC team or periodic (and unpredictable) visitors. Since the DI is responsible for the actual assignments and for transportation, the credibility of the PICs with parents was largely dependent upon whether the DI was committed to allowing them to function as a one-stop service center.

It was only in February that the Superintendent produced a staffing pattern for the PICs which indicated clearly that DI staff would be part of the zone team and thus the zone would in fact be making the assignments — as intended by the controlled choice assignment plan adopted a year earlier. The DI will continue to be responsible for assignment policy and for assuring the integrity of the process.

As another result of the October meeting, a statewide forum was held for PIC staff from fifteen cities with choice-based desegregation plans.

KINDERGARTEN APPLICATION PROCESS

Diana Lam's blueprint for parent information stresses that "parents would be required to come to the Parent Center initially to register each child for Kindergarten or the child's first year in the system, and this visit would be seen as the first opportunity to get the parent to see the ongoing usefulness of the center. The first visit must be a positive one." Similarly, the State has urged all desegregating school systems to make the PIC the point of entry for all pupils, to assure that all receive the same information and counselling and as a means of getting parents off on the right foot in their relationship with the schools.

This was not so important under a geocode-based desegregation plan, especially with Boston's exception for neighborhood kindergartens. A parent could take a five-year-old to the local school and be registered by the kindergarten teacher in whose class she would subsequently be. Apart from the few who wanted a magnet school (and these were likely to be well-informed middle-class parents), there were no choices to be made and thus little need for information.

Unfortunately, registration for kindergarten was carried out in the Spring of 1989, as in the past, at individual schools by kindergarten teachers, rather than by the trained staff of the parent information centers. This had predictably negative results. The majority of parents expressed only one choice for kindergarten, in almost all cases presumably the one where they actually registered, with the result that many hundreds of children could not be assigned at all until their parents were reached by parent information center staff and encouraged to apply for a school with space available.

The State did not become aware that kindergarten registrations had been carried out by school staff rather than by parent information center staff until a year later, when the School Committee voted -- against the Superintendent's recommendation -- to follow the same procedure in 1990. In a February 16th 1990 letter to School Committee President Burke I warned that

> [s]uccessful implementation of a controlled choice assignment plan requires that all parents -- and especially those new to the system -- receive the same information (in the interest of fairness) from staff who have been fully trained to interpret all of the options and their consequences. . . . If parents register at the nearest school without an opportunity to consider other options, there is a good chance they will indicate only

one choice. This, in turn, will lead to a higher proportion of parents who do not receive any of their choices -- an outcome that will compromise support for and the success of parent choice in Boston.

It should be possible, I noted, for the parent information center staff to conduct registration sessions in schools in all parts of the city.

On February 27th, the School Committee directed staff to prepare options for kindergarten registration that would assure accurate and impartial information to all parents. Although no decision had been made as of this writing, three Saturdays had been designated for kindergarten registration by PIC staff at seven convenient sites around the city, with Monday through Friday registration occurring only at the PICs. One staff member of each elementary school had been trained to provide information about the assignment process.

As of early April, the school system's procedures for kindergarten registration include a single day (April 26th) on which parents will be able to come to local schools to register their children. Since the first round of elementary-level assignment notices are to be mailed on April 20th, this will be an opportunity for parents who had registered earlier but without receiving the school(s) selected to indicate other choices, based upon information about available seats that will be provided in print-out form at each school on the 26th. This should have the effect of reducing the number of kindergarten-aged children who are not assigned until very late in the process.

We have expressed concern about whether the school staff conducting registrations on that day will be able to provide adequate explanations of such assignment options as the kindergartens integrating bilingual and regular education pupils, or the O'Hearn kindergarten, which integrates special needs who would otherwise be in a substantially-separate program. It is important that parents who opt for such distinctive kindergartens have a clear understanding of what that will mean for their children.

The City Wide Educational Coalition recommended, in November 1989, that kindergarten registration for 1990 be handled in two phases. First, a number of "permanent" kindergarten seats should be designated at each school to match the number of first grade seats, and registration carried out, starting in January, for those seats. The desegregation guidelines would be applied as these seats were filled. A separate registration process could then be carried out, in May, for additional "temporary" kindergarten seats, which would be

made available based upon space available and local demand. In this way, the confusion between the permanent and temporary seats would be minimized. The State recommended, also in November, that this approach or a variation upon it be adopted for 1990.

Although the Superintendent, in recommending the assignment plan modifications that (with some exceptions) were approved by the School Committee in December 1989, noted that he would subsequently recommend modifications to kindergarten assignments, he decided subsequently to leave this part of the plan unchanged. In view of the confusion that surrounded kindergarten assignments in 1989, and the hundreds of pupils unassigned well into the school year, this seems unfortunate.

ACCURATE INFORMATION

The parent information process started off on the wrong foot in March and April, 1989, as a result of the haste with which the plan was implemented after many months of discussion. Application forms were sent out to parents before the printed information about schools was available, in part because of translation delays. According to the Citywide Educational Coalition (CWEC),

> [s]ome parents were incorrectly told to return the forms immediately to have the best shot at their first choice school. Many did, then changed their minds after reading fact sheets and visiting schools. No info went to neighborhood agencies. Only a handful of parents went of free bus tours from zone offices -- they weren't well publicized and took place during working hours. Parent Center staff say what parents **really** want is someone to talk to. Many are still very confused.

In part because of the lack of face-to-face counselling of the great majority of those who submitted applications (including those registering for kindergarten at their neighborhood schools), only 40% of those returning applications in the first round made more than one choice. State monitors were told that most of the single-choice applications were from parents with no direct PIC contact, including those who registered at kindergartens and at School Department headquarters.

For those who did not get their first choice, this required another application or -- eventually -- an involuntary assignment. Unfortunately, only 10% of the parents of first

graders who were not assigned in the first round were reached by the parent information and outreach efforts to make different choices for the second round. State monitoring of the PICs in June found them receiving a great many calls from

> parents who made only one choice, possibly because they were insufficiently counseled by just reading the application materials. Many of these parents are now calling to make additional choices and to find out where they stand on waiting lists. [A PIC director] appeared not to know how to access waiting lists, another example of the need to have a computer literate staff person as well as someone from the [Department of Implementation].

It was thus not enough to provide information about individual schools and about the assignment process itself. Parents needed to know their chances of getting an assignment to a particular school before deciding to select it as their first choice. After the first round of assignments were issued, in June, it should have been possible to say with considerable accuracy whether seats remained in particular schools for white or minority pupils.

As State monitoring discovered, in June 24,

> information has not yet been provided to the parent information centers about the number of places remaining in each school after the initial round of assignments. This is not difficult to determine, as my earlier memo and this one demonstrate, but it is of no use unless in the hands of those who will put it to use. Those counselling parents need to be able to tell them whether excess space exists for pupils of their racial/ethnic group in each school. Staff from the Office of Educational Equity visited each of the parent information centers on Friday June 23rd, and found that this crucial information was not available to their staff.

A month later, one of the zone superintendents complained to State monitors of frustrations over "inadequate training coming from the Central Office, poor communications about such things as the reassignment of students [from schools whose closing had just been decided by the School Committee], and inadequate information in general about assignment policies under the new plan." The monitor comcluded that

> [t]here appears to be rather poor communication between the zone PICs and the [Department of Implementation] -- particularly the flow of information from the D.I. to the zone offices. The D.I. staff supposedly assigned to the zone offices have not been around enough to be very

helpful. This lack of good, reliable information at the PICs, and poor communication of assignment policy decisions from the D.I., is undermining the effectiveness of the PICs as real information centers. Because there are so many referrals of parents' questions to the D.I., parents will eventually not depend on the PICs at all, but go directly to the D.I. . . . Other than the manual for accessing computer information, I have not seen any other set of instructions on how to operate or carry out the various functions of Parent Information Centers. [Banks 7/13/89]

Unfortunately, this continued to be a problem, as noted in my August 1 review of the second round of applications.

The very important task for the parent information centers during the early part of the summer was to reach parents who were not given one of their choices in the first round (and thus were in the "pool," to encourage them to make additional and different selections, and to counsel newly-registering parents to select schools with space available for their racial/ethnic group. **The more parents persuaded to apply for the available space, the fewer would have to be assigned involuntarily.**

Unfortunately, . . . the 233 preferences indicated for the second round of sixth grade assignments did little to change the existing pattern. . . . In general, "the rich got richer and the poor got poorer." Of 31 first-choice applications to the Lewenberg, only one can be accommodated within the "ideal" enrollments; of 37 for the Timilty, only 2; of 26 for the Gavin, only 2; of 32 for the Taft, only 3. More than half (126) of the first choices were for these four schools, but only 8 of them can be accommodated.

This represents an unacceptably high proportion of disappointed applicants, as a result -- apparently -- of the failure or inability of the parent information staff to counsel parents away from choices which they should have known **could not** be honored.

Equally serious, the short-fall of pupils who can be assigned voluntarily to meet desegregation goals in most schools has scarcely been reduced by recruitment and counselling efforts between the first and second round of assignments. **The Cleveland needed 51 white applicants: two applied; the Gavin needed 80 black applicants: one applied. The Dearborn, Curley, Thompson, Edison, Lewis, Wheatley, King schools did not attract a single white first-choice application in the second round. . . .**

there continues to be a short-fall of 403 black, 234 white, and 65 other minority applicants to meet the "ideal" enrollment set by the plan; that represents seven hundred pupils who will have to be assigned involuntarily.

At this point in the process, there is no way to avoid a large number of involuntary assignments to the sixth grade (and to the first grade). The parent information process has not succeeded in persuading parents to consider as alternatives schools that -- in some cases -- have a great deal to offer. Over the next month, then, there will be a different challenge: **to convince parents to accept the involuntary assignments that they will be given.**

This will be a task for the parent information centers, but even more importantly for the staff of each of the schools that will be receiving involuntarily-assigned pupils.

Our recommendation is that one or more members of the staff of any school with twenty or more pupils assigned involuntarily to the entry grades one and six be employed for a week in August to reach out aggressively to the parents of those pupils, discuss the program of the school and any concerns about safety or school climate, and offer them the opportunity to talk with satisfied parents who have children in the school already. This would be an appropriate use of [state] Chapter 636 funding.

The staff of the parent information centers should work closely with these target schools and make a special effort to interest newly-registering parents in these schools.

Frustrated with lack of progress on several essential aspects of the new assignment plan, Commissioner Raynolds insisted, in early August, on meeting with Superintendent Wilson and the zone superintendents. At this very productive meeting it was clear that the latter were not aware of their authority and responsibilities under the plan, nor that the State was making available additional Chapter 636 funds to permit them to hire additional temporary staff for the PICs. Several of the zone superintendent reported that their staff had reached out to parents of unassigned pupils, but that the zones had not been given information on how many seats were available in each school.

By the beginning of September, State monitoring found encouraging indications that the PICs were better-prepared to provide accurate information.

> Much of this is due to the improved computer skills of PIC staff and the availability of more information on the computer. The organizational and management skills of the Centers are also improving; all parents are dealt with expeditiously when they arrive and the process of counseling parents appears to be smoother than it was. [Banks 9/1/89]

In order to seek to "hold" as many as possible of the pupils assigned to schools that their parents had not selected, mailing labels for such pupils were provided by the Department of Implementation to the schools to which these pupils had been assigned so that there could be a direct contact encouraging them to attend.

In addition, a mailing was sent to the parents of all kindergarten-age children not assigned over the summer -- often, as noted above, because they had not been appropriately counselled about the importance of indicating several choices -- informing them that it had not been possible to give them one of their choices, and urging them "to contact one of the parent information centers to select a school within your zone that has available kindergarten seats." In addition, the parent information center staff was asked to contact each of the parents without kindergarten assignments.

Despite these improvements — which owe much to the efforts of Albert Lau to create a computer-based system for information and assignments --the continuing lack of a procedural manual for the assignment process, and of training based upon such a manual, made the PIC staff over-dependent upon calling downtown to ask the Department of Implementation about matters which they should have been able to resolve -- or, in some cases, giving out inaccurate and inconsistent information. Although the School Committee's implementation schedule had called for the Department of Implementation to "finalize roles and procedures for application and assignment process" by November 7th, it was not until February 1990 that a draft and then a final version were circulated. Training of PIC staff, scheduled for early December, did not take place until two months later.

Even as Boston improved the ability of PICs to give parents accurate information about the assignment process and the seats available, there continued to be concern about whether the information provided on educational options was as useful as it should be.

In 1989 individual fact sheets were prepared on each school; in 1990 these were consolidated into zone-wide booklets for

each level of schooling so that, for example, there was a two-page presentation on each elementary school in the East Zone, bound together as a booklet and sent home to parents.

The State expressed concern, in November, about the preparation of these school information booklets before those schools which had not proved attractive to parents in 1989 had had a chance to develop their school improvement plans. A primary reason, indeed, why the Board of Education set the deadline for these plans at November 1st was to assure that the school change process would begin well before parents would be asked to make choices. The unfortunate delays in moving this process forward (see discussion below), and the need to allow time for translation of the school information, had the result that the information available to parents in printed form as they made their choices for 1990 was already out of date in many cases.

"In the final analysis," I wrote, "it's not clear why the decision on how to present information about schools and what information to provide should not be the responsibility of the zones. There is no pressing need for uniformity, provided that each zone does an effective job. Giving each zone a budget and the responsibility would help to solidify the link between school improvement and parent choice" [to Clarence Hoover, 11/30/89].

OUTREACH TO PARENTS

In addition to serving parents who visit or phone, it is essential that parent information staff find ways of reaching out to encourage other parents to be active choosers. To take a very simple example, Boston's PICs were less effective than they should have been in 1989 because of the inconvenient location of two of them, and the fact that they even lacked external signs announcing their presence until after several months of urging by State monitors.

In July, improved locations were identified for the two inconvenient PICs, but eight months later they had still not moved.

After the many critical comments, above, it is important to note that the Boston Public Schools undertook a major effort of outreach to parents in early 1990. Several zones organized school fairs and other events on weekends and in the evening to bring parents into contact with a variety of educational offerings, and the PICs sought innovative ways to reach out to those who are not usually responsive. It will

be possible to assess the effectiveness of these outreach efforts when data is available on the number of parents who indicated more than one choice -- and the number of kindergarten parents who registered early rather than waiting until September.

The process of applications for September 1990 did not go as smoothly as it should have, given the opportunity to learn from problems that arose in 1989. On the first day of enrollment of pupils for kindergarten through fifth grade, February 26, the registration forms were not available at two or more of the parent information centers until after noon. Parents who came in to register at the first opportunity were told they would have to return at another time.

Several weeks later the process of application for high schools was held up because Superintendent Wilson declined to have the forms printed until the School Committee had made a decision about whether there would be a new High School of the Performing Arts (see below). Delaying the start of this process could have a serious impact upon budget planning.

There was also at least one report, in February 1990, of parents being told -- inaccurately -- that they could not register a child new to the system without an immunization record, which in fact was not required until actual enrollment in a school. Such problems of inconsistent information should become less common as a result of the procedural manual and associated training.

SUMMARY

These glitches in the process relate at least in large part to delays in decision-making by the Superintendent and School Committee, and to insufficient clarity about what decisions should be made by the zone superintendents.

Many problems could have been avoided, and the process made more effective, if Superintendent Wilson had acted promptly to set goals and a timetable for the zone superintendents with respect to parent information (and, as we will see, to school improvement), and had stated clearly the authority and the resources that they would have to meet these goals. As noted above, the meeting requested by Commissioner Raynolds in early August was the first occasion, according to the zone superintendents, on which they had been apprised of their role in implementing the controlled choice assignment plan, and subsequent monitoring continued to disclose that crucial decisions were not being made at the zone level

because no clear signal was being given that this was possible.

There was significant -- though insufficient --improvement in the quality and timeliness of information provided to parents in 1990 compared with 1989. PIC staff are markedly more confident of their ability to advise parents about school choices, and the educational fairs held in several zones were significant both for the parents who attended and also for the school personnel who were stimulated to think about how to present the distinctive qualities of their schools.

Ultimately, this last point is the most important. If school staff become strongly oriented to "telling their story" to parents and to responding to the concerns and the educational goals that parents express, controlled choice will have its desired effect upon the effectiveness of the Boston Public Schools. In the final analysis, parent information efforts and a fair and orderly process for assignments are meaningful only if the educational choices available are distinctive as to approach but equivalent as to general quality.

School Improvement Related to Choice

THE PROMISE OF CHOICE

One of the promises made to parents in the school system's March 1989 brochure explaining the controlled choice plan was that "[e]very time parents select (or don't select) schools, they make a judgment on the quality of education at each one. When parents identify a school as not providing quality education for their children, it will be targeted for technical assistance and specific improvements."

This is an essential aspect of controlled choice, and the basis for believing that it can result in school improvement. Unfortunately, the School Department was slow to make the connection between parent choice and specific measures to strengthen the schools not selected.

This failure to link choice with school-level measures was not new. The Board's July 1983 Report to the Court included a detailed analysis of ninth grade preferences, noting that

> [o]ne of the most valuable sources of information on how the Boston student desegregation plan is "working" is the functioning of student choices built into the plan. Contrary to the general impression, adoption of this plan has greatly increased the amount of choice for students in the public schools. . . no system under a mandate to remedy past unconstitutional racial segregation can fail to control student assignments with great care to assure that they have a positive effect. Over time, however, it is reasonable to seek to increase the proportion of students who do receive their first (or second, or third) choice. . . A large school system, after all, is not static; programs are created, and others phased out, school facilities are built or closed . .. It is reasonable, and indeed obligatory, to ask whether these changes are made with a consistent design: to expand relevant opportunities, to make access more equal, to respond to the educational goals of students and their parents, and to assure stable desegregation. The data available in Boston as a result of the annual assignment process could be very valuable in guiding this process, and especially so at a point when basic questions are being raised about the shape and structure of the education which will be offered in the decades ahead. In effect, the assignment applications constitute an

> annual referendum on desired educational opportunities, and indeed more than a referendum, since each student (or parent) is in fact indicating a choice which may well translate into a commitment. These decisions are not lightly made, and they deserve to be listened to attentively. [volume II, pages 118-9]

These observations seven years ago about the relevance of expressed preferences to educational improvement and to equity apply with increased force to those under the controlled choice assignment plan. Unfortunately, as we noted in subsequent reports to the Court, the School Department did not make full use of the power of choice built into the 1975 assignment plan for school improvement and special desegregation measures. The fact that most assignments continued to be made on the basis of geo-codes had the effect of shielding non-magnet schools from the operation of parent choice.

When, in 1985, the School Committee proposed certain modifications to the geocode-based assignment plan in order to encourage school-level initiatives, the State expressed strong support. The next year, however, we reported that

> we continue to be disappointed over the lack of efforts at the school and district level to make desegregation a success; it continues to be almost entirely a mechanical matter of assignments. As a result, Boston has not yet begun to enjoy the secondary benefits of desegregation which have been evident in other cities in the Commonwealth. . . [Monitoring had found] that there was a great deal of confusion on the part of principals and even district superintendents about how they were expected to cooperate in making desegregation more effective by reaching out to parents [7/11/1986].

Under a controlled choice assignment plan, the "referendum" effect operates powerfully to indicate which schools enjoy the confidence of parents and which do not. Public comment during the period of review of the 1989 controlled choice plan returned to this theme continually. On the one hand, such observers as the Mayor's Advisory Committee on School Reform supported it as "allowing principals and teachers to identify the needs unique to their school and to address them and to build educational offerings to attract parents" [12/23/1989]. Many parents, especially from Dorchester, were concerned whether the school system would in fact be able to replicate the "good" schools which — in their view -- were disproportionately found in the other zones. Magnet schools would no longer be available on a city-wide basis, and there were doubts whether sufficient commitment to

decentralization existed to allow school-level change. Some members of the School Committee were confident that parent choice would force ineffective schools to improve, while others argued that nothing could change without more funding.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVES

As the first controlled choice application process took place in Boston, much was at stake. If parents selected only schools in their own neighborhoods, I noted in May, a large number of involuntary assignments would be necessary. If, on the other hand, fifteen years of experience with desegregated schooling led many parents to look beyond the closest school, the operation of choice would produce both voluntary desegregation and pressure for school improvement.

The new student assignment plan provided Zone School Improvement and Planning Councils with a primary focus upon "monitoring the extent to which educational opportunities in its zone are equivalent to those in others" by identifying "successful school improvement initiatives," reviewing and approving individual school improvement plans, and dispensing discretionary state and federal funding within the zone.

After three years of implementation of controlled choice, the new assignment plan stipulated, the zone superintendent and council would "take whatever measures" were necessary to enable undersubscribed schools to become more attractive to parents of all racial/ethnic groups. These measures could include "changing the school's educational leader and major restructuring of the school's educational mission."

Concern was expressed by counsel for the Plaintiffs in Boston's desegregation case that one effect of expanded parental choice would be that schools in minority neighborhoods would be unable to attract a sufficient number of pupils to be desegregated and might in consequence be closed. As one ground for opposing the implementation of the plan in 1989 they charged, on February 13th 1989, that it was "devoid of steps of the magnitude needed to enhance the attractiveness" of schools in black neighborhoods, and subsequently they provided a list of sixteen schools that they considered "vulnerable under a controlled choice plan."

Two weeks later the School Committee voted unanimously that "school improvement plans" should be developed by March 31. The Administration directed every school to supply certain standard information on test scores and what was being done to improve them, but there was no concerted support from the

school system for a process of planning and staff development consistent with the approach to school effectiveness recommended by most experts. This round of plans was essentially a paper exercise.

The State's review of the initial round of applications for sixth grade found encouraging the ability of some schools, though not previously "magnets," to overcome the tendency of parents to select a "neighborhood school":

> Can schools in minority areas attract white pupils?
>
> The schools which are attractive to minority pupils are also attractive to white pupils.
>
> Are popular schools concentrated in white areas?
>
> Ranking all middle schools by the criteria used in this analysis (number of preferences in relation to number of pupils in 6th grade currently, by racial/ethnic group), the most popular across racial/ethnic groups are not concentrated in white areas.
>
> The two most popular (Timilty and Taft), the two next most popular (Lewenberg and Rogers), the two that follow those in popularity (Thompson and Edison), and the four that follow those (Curley, Edwards, Irving and McCormack) are evenly distributed between white and minority areas. The least popular group includes the Gavin in South Boston as well as the Lewis and Wilson in minority areas and the Cleveland in a racially-mixed area). [May 30th 1989]

The same pattern was maintained when applications for first grade were taken into account:

> Schools varied widely in the number of pupils of each racial/ethnic group whose parents selected them. Some were popular with one group, some with both minority and white parents, others with no group of parents. The challenge to school improvement and parent outreach is obvious. [June 6th 1989]

In a summary report which included subsequent applications through the start of school, I found that

> Some of the attractive schools are magnet schools which have always drawn volunteers. Most of the schools [with no pupils assigned involuntarily], however, are able for the first time this year to offer to enroll pupils who are not "geocoded" to attend; thus they are starting to behave like magnet schools.

Over the past decade, parents have been able to choose among ten magnet elementary schools, of which three required no involuntary assignments this year. Under the new plan, they are able to choose among all schools in their zone. It is notable, under these new conditions, that eighteen other schools have enrolled pupils of all racial/ethnic categories on a strictly voluntary basis this year. There were fourteen other schools, not shown on the list above, to which the overwhelming majority of first grade assignments were voluntary.

It should also be noted, that a number of these schools attracting pupils of all racial/ethnic groups are located in inner-city areas. In the case of the Hernandez, there was considerable publicity last Spring about drug-dealing in the immediate vicinity. The Trotter, for twenty years an extremely popular magnet school, may have suffered this year from publicity around several nearby shootings.

. . . other schools had difficulty, this year, attracting pupils on a voluntary basis. Minority parents are not, by and large, volunteering their children for the Perry, Condon, and Tynan schools in South Boston, nor are white parents volunteering their children for the Ellis, Higginson, and Quincy Dickerman schools in Roxbury/North Dorchester. Other schools with excellent locations for drawing an integrated enrollment (such as the Sumner, Fuller, and Mendell) were not successful in doing so.

For the controlled choice plan to have its desired effect of increasing the supply and diversity of effective schools in Boston, it is essential that school improvement efforts be targeted to these schools that experience extreme difficulty in attracting a sufficient number of pupils. Experience in other Massachusetts cities has shown that additional resources alone will not make the critical difference, without a school-level process of setting ambitious goals and organizing to attain them. [September 25th]

Despite these repeated admonitions, and the Board of Education's deadline of November 1st for completion of a

'Strategic Plan' for improvement at specific schools covering, at a minimum, any elementary or middle school that fails to satisfy assignment guidelines, and addressing each of the five planning areas identified by the City of Boston (program placement/scheduling, leadership, discretionary funds, facilities improvement, outreach/recruitment [5/23/89],

little was done by the school system to assure that appropriate activities were taking place at the zone and school levels. In October, Commissioner Raynolds wrote to Superintendent Wilson to offer the State's assistance, through the newly-established Boston/Chelsea Team, to "those schools experiencing difficulty attracting applicants," and stressed that this assistance could include both funding and also "flexibility in program guidelines to support school restructuring."

On October 17th, the School Committee itself voted a schedule for implementation of the assignment plan that called for "identification of schools in need of programmatic help and development of school improvement plans" during the month of November.

Interviews with zone superintendents in November, however, found them scarcely aware of the requirement of school improvement plans related to attracting desegregated enrollments on a voluntary basis. When, at a December 5th meeting of the monitoring commission, the School Department's representative was asked who at Central Office was getting out word about which schools had problems with attracting applicants, and who was providing quality control on the school improvement plans, no answer was forthcoming.

The State's Boston/Chelsea Urban Team then took the initiative to provide information to Central Office and Zone Superintendents, recommending a three-stage process. The first, already under way, involved the identification of all available resources for school improvement and also "equally important--a mode of administering resources as well as local, state and federal requirements that will support fundamental change in the vulnerable schools." The second would occur at the zone level, and involve the allocation of resources and the development of intervention strategies, and should be completed "before individual schools identify their distinctive themes for parent information materials." The third would be the actual process of planning and school improvement at individual schools, which should "fit in very well with the system's emphasis on school-level decision-making and on school-wide Chapter 1 projects involving fundamental restructuring" [to Supt. Wilson, 12/7/89].

This memo included a list of twenty elementary schools and seven middle schools which had been identified, on the basis of parent choices in 1989 and of other factors, as especially requiring attention.

Although there was no response from the Superintendent to these State initiatives, the Boston/Chelsea Team worked with

zone offices to refine the list of schools further, and with the Office of External Funding to develop a greatly simplified process of accessing state and federal funds. Eighteen of the twenty-seven schools were designated, by the Zone Superintendents, as "schools that are restructuring" (STAR schools), and a single proposal form was developed to apply for a variety of funding sources.

STAR schools were invited to submit a preliminary plan/funding proposal in March, with a comprehensive restructuring plan due in November 1990. These plans were to be developed by an expanded School Improvement Council at each school, and to focus on

- Governance and organization of the school;
- Approaches to learning and teaching;
- Amount and kind of student support services;
- Relations between schools and families;
- Public relations bringing the school's message to the community.

Models of educational restructuring were developed to simplify further the task of conceptualizing and writing proposals. These models or prototypes were not designed to substitute for school-level efforts to come to grips with questions of goals, organization, pedagogy and accountability, but to provide a framework for asking these questions. They included models of and a process for developing integration of regular and special education, regular and bilingual education, cooperative learning, school-parent linkages, family literacy programs, and a variety of other approaches to restructuring elementary and middle schools which have been much talked-about but not often operationalized effectively in urban school systems.

NEW "MIDDLE SCHOOLS"

The action proposed by the Superintendent and voted by the School Committee on July 25th 1989 included the following related measures:

* merge Umana H.S. and Boston Technical H.S. programs under the name Boston Technical High School

* create Middle School Prep Program in science and

technology at Madison Park site, for appoximately 300 students

* create Middle School Prep Program in vocational education at Humphrey Center [part of the Madison Park complex] for approximately 300 students (75 students to be scheduled for Fall 1989)

* close the Madison Park comprehensive high school and move its students into other high schools

* offer a Cape Verdean Vocational Program, the rest of the program will move to South Boston H.S.

The Plaintiffs objected to these hasty measures and especially to the creation of new middle schools out of thin air, pointing out that

(a) curricula for these programs do not exist; . . . how can two new programs be created in a few weeks?

(b) at the 90-day meetings, inquiry was made about the efficacy of placing middle school students at Madison Park on the same campus with large numbers of high school students . .

(c) at the 90-day meetings, the creation of a program directing students to a vocational curriculum as early as grade 6 was challenged . .

The State raised similar concerns, charging that "[t]he decision to create two new middle schools at the Madison Park site is precipitous and raises many questions about equity, premature selection, and program. . . . Whether to create specialized middle schools should be discussed carefully over the next stage of planning."

Why not, we asked, simply keep grades 7-8 of the Umana in the same facility, together with the pupils transferred there from the Barnes? "The 'Court capacity' is 1050; the gain for desegregation would be considerable. And there would be one baffling challenge less for the Madison Park" complex, which housed four separate secondary schools in 1988-89, would absorb the Umana High School in September, and had been experiencing great difficulty in attracting pupils to its vocational education facility.

Despite repeated objections by all parties to the 90-day process other than the School Department itself, and reservations on the part of Madison Park Headmaster James Watson and Zone Superintendent Fung, the Superintendent

persisted in his commitment to these middle school programs in the Madison Park complex, and they were included in the parent information materials and on the application forms distributed in March 1990.

At the end of the month, however, the School Committee voted 11-2 to remove the vocational middle school and offer other assignments to its pupils. The technical middle school was continued for grades 7 and 8, with the stipulation that no new pupils would be assigned for sixth grade. Whether this will result in a new 7-12 grade structure for Boston Technical in the future, with admission to 7th grade (as at Boston Latin and Latin Academy) on the basis of an examination, or whether these intermediate grades will be phased out, remains uncertain.

TWO-WAY BILINGUAL EDUCATION

Controversy arose during the process of review of the Student Assignment Plan over continuing access to the popular Rafael Hernandez School. The Hernandez was the only elementary school in Boston offering "two-way bilingual education," with all pupils learning in both English and Spanish. This model of integrated bilingual education has been strongly promoted by the Department of Education in recent years, with priority for the use of State magnet school funds going to planning and implementation of such programs in cities across the Commonwealth. The Massachusetts Advocacy Center, in its recent report on tracking in Boston, points out that

> [b]y definition desegregative, two-way programs have proved to be an effective way by which students with limited knowledge of English may be integrated into the educational mainstream. . . . second language proficiency is enhanced by the availability of peers who are native speakers of the second language and who can serve as models for language use (page 90).

The Hernandez program had recently moved from what was becoming the East Zone to what was becoming the West Zone, and its active Dorchester parents demanded to be allowed to keep their children in the program. Consultants Willie and Alves recommended that the Hernandez

> be permitted to experiment with a grade structure that extends from kindergarten through eighth grade because of its focus on language learning and a Multicultural curriculum. Further, we recommend that the Hernandez be phased out as a citywide magnet school but continue as a

> zone-specific Multicultural school . . , but that students in each of the three zones have proportional access to the Hernandez until it is replicated in two additional zones. We recommend that two more two-way bilingual schools should be created, one in each of the other two attendance zones.

Expansion of the two-way bilingual model to accommodate the large number of applicants for this innovative instructional model had been urged before, with little effective response from the school system. In 1984, for example, the Bilingual Master Parents Advisory Council ("Master PAC") urged that two additional elementary schools and one middle school adopt this model of Spanish/English instruction for pupils of all racial/ethnic groups; the Agassiz and Kennedy schools in Jamaica Plain, the Gardner in Brighton, and the Blackstone and Hurley in the South End were mentioned as possibilities. There was discussion of creating a Haitian two-way program as well. The State endorsed these proposals at the time.

A parent survey commissioned by the Citywide Education Coalition in 1985 found that 66% of black, 38% of white, and 40% of Hispanic public school parents surveyed reported they would send their children to a non-neighborhood school if it offered this model of instruction. The Hispanic Plaintiff-intervenors, in requesting that the Court approve replication of the Hernandez model, pointed out that the State was strongly supporting two-way bilingual magnet schools in other desegregating cities, and had been offering planning funds for such schools -- with no response from Boston.

In February 1985 the School Committee voted that the Hernandez two-way program be shifted from a tiny facility in Dorchester to the larger Holland facility in the same section of Dorchester -- over considerable objections from Holland parents and staff -- but a fire at that school forced a change of plans. The Roosevelt facility on the Roxbury/Jamaica Plain border was selected instead, as its middle school program was phased out, and renamed the Rafael Hernandez.

The Mackey Middle School in the South End was designated to continue the two-way instruction provided at the Hernandez. The decision, in July 1989, to close the Mackey before September drew immediate protests from the Hispanic Plaintiff-intervenors. Pointing out that the Court had approved this two-way middle school program in April 1985, this party and the Plaintiffs objected to its summary dissolution. The School Department decided to offer Mackey pupils the option of a (possibly temporary) two-way program at the Taft Middle school; twenty-two are participating as of

the 1989-90 school year, without a clearly-defined two-way model. The fact that so few of the pupils who had been attending the Mackey chose to continue with two-way bilingual instruction reflects what observers describe as half-hearted implementation at the Mackey.

For pupils entering sixth grade who would have attended the Mackey, the Hurley school added a sixth grade to its k-5 in order to accommodate Spanish Advanced Work Class and two-way bilingual pupils; thirty-one were in attendance in March 1990. The Hernandez also added a sixth grade, enrolling both former Hernandez fifth graders and pupils from other elementary schools. It was subsequently decised by the North Zone Superintendent and Zone Council that the Hurley could not accommodate grades 6-8 and that the two-way program should instead be offered at the Barnes/Umana facility in East Boston for the middle school grades, while the Hurley offered it for K1, K2 and first grade for September 1990. The Hernandez is adding a seventh grade in 1990 and will extend through eighth grade in 1991.

In March 1989 the Superintendent made a commitment to establishment of additional two-way bilingual programs in the North and East zones, to be phased in starting in September 1989. Despite the identification of three schools in the East Zone desiring to adopt the two-way model, and state planning grants to these schools, Hernandez parents from Dorchester lobbied the School Committee so persistently that it voted, in December, that the school would continue to draw pupils citywide "without consideration of replication in any of the three k-8 zones."

At the same time the Committee expressed its support for those replication efforts, and stated that "the North and East Zone will have programs operational in September 1990." The State committed funds for planning in September, but there appeared to be little urgency on the part of the Superintendent either to assure that sites were designated or planning and staff development undertaken. It was only the collaboration of the Boston/Chelsea Team with zone offices and Bilingual Director Nydia Mendez that this process began in a number of schools in early 1990.

No specifics were available in time to incorporate into the printed parent information material, but several additional options were listed on the application forms distributed starting February 26: the Hurley (k-1) and the Barnes/Umana (6-8) in the North Zone, the Marshall (k-1), the Russell (k-1) and the Cleveland (6) in the East Zone, and the Hernandez (k-7) citywide. Although the Agassiz in the West Zone is also planning for a two-way program, that was not offered as

an option on the applications.

The experience of the Hernandez with pupils entering in the upper grades without proficiency in both languages used for instruction made it clear that the assignment rules should include a provision calling for a language assessment in such cases. The rules might provide, for example, that

> any student seeking admission to the third grade or above of a two-way bilingual program must demonstrate oral language proficiency in both English and Spanish.

The procedural manual for controlled choice noted that guidelines would be developed for assignment to "Two-Way bilingual and Integrative Bilingual Classes," but this had not been completed a month later, in early April. Since the application process for the first round of elementary school assignments had by then already been completed, it would be difficult to incorporate a language assessment for the upper grades of the Hernandez.

Such issues will arise with increasing frequency as more and more school develop pedagogies in which the upper grades build upon distinctive elements in the lower grades. A single basal reader was prescribed, several years ago, in large part in order to assure that pupils transfering between schools because of residential mobility would receive consistent instruction. Under controlled choice, however, such transfers will no longer be necessary, and increased assignment stability should make it possible for schools to plan for a continuity of instruction beneficial to pupils -- but inconsistent in some cases with admissions at the upper grades.

We can expect school staff to seek to protect the coherence of their educational strategies by asking for the opportunity to determine admission criteria. To the extent that such requests seek to select pupils on the basis of ability or to screen out those with special needs, they will be inconsistent with equal access, but such screening criteria as language proficiency seem reasonable for a school that expects such proficiency of all its upper graders.

LOCATION AND SIZE OF BILINGUAL PROGRAMS

In an extended discussion of public school choice (May/June 1989), the newsletter of La Raza, a national Hispanic organization, expressed concern about the possible exclusion

of bilingual program pupils from the choice process. "In the newly developed Boston choice plan," the newsletter commented, "students who require bilingual services may choose from only three schools because only three schools offer such services. Many Hispanic students will have no significant choice until all schools participating in choice plans are required to provide bilingual services. These exclusionary policies severely limit choice for Hispanics and, once again, segregate Hispanics from the rest of the student population."

While it would be more accurate to say that pupils requiring a bilingual program have a varying number of choices depending upon the number of programs for their language in their zone (or, if none is available in the zone, in the city), the fundamental point is accurate and has been brought into sharp relief as planning has gone forward for high school magnet themes.

Boston's fifteen high schools vary widely in the number and proportion of non-mainstream pupils they serve. In the table below, SS refers to substantially-separate special needs pupils, while the other columns indicate the various language groups receiving bilingual education (Chinese, French/Kreyol, Cape Verdean, Spanish, Khmer, Vietnamese). The final column shows the proportion of all pupils in each school who are in atypical programs.

Table 1

HIGH SCHOOL	SS	CH	FR	CV	SP	KH	VT	other	T	%
Latin Academy		5			2				7	1%
Boston Latin	3	4	1		9				17	1%
East Boston	16								16	2%
Boston Tech	5	12	2		2	2	4	1	28	2%
Snowden	12								12	3%
Burke	91								91	12%
South Boston	62				34	36			132	14%
Boston Hi	42		36		70				148	17%
West Roxbury	92		111					29	232	17%
English	84				157			10	251	21%
Hyde Park	118	-	161						279	28%
Dorchester	89				121				210	29%
Madison Park	156			225	84			12	477	29%
Brighton	90				106		201		397	43%
Charlestown	99	219			136				454	48%
TOTAL	959	240	311	225	721	38	205	52	2,699	17%

In a number of cases, only English-as-a-second-language (ESL) support is provided to a handful of pupils classified as in bilingual education, while in other cases the program enrollment has declined sharply in recent years. In a report to the Federal District Court five years ago, the State reported that pupils were remaining in the Greek and Italian programs for their entire schooling, suggesting that this was a means of avoiding integration with minority pupils. The Italian high school program is now no longer offered, and the Greek program serves only 29 pupils. The Khmer and Lao programs have become much smaller as a result, in part, of a strong desire for mainstreaming, while the Haitian (French and Kreyol) and Cape Verdean programs continue to grow and Spanish enrollment remains strong.

As the table above indicates, a program in Spanish is offered at seven high schools, a program in French/Kreyol at three, while programs in six other languages are offered at one school each. This supports the concern expressed by La Raza: as the controlled choice process leads to increasing specialization of program emphasis in the high schools, the issue arises whether limited English-proficient (LEP) pupils will have access only to the "magnet theme" offered in one school -- or somewhat more, in the case of Hispanic and Haitian pupils.

In addition to the question of access, the distribution of bilingual and substantially-separate programs has an effect upon what different high schools can offer in their comprehensive programs.

Table 2

HIGH SCHOOL	mainstream	atypical	% of system	total	% of system
Snowden	462	12	0.4%	474	2.9%
Charlestown	501	454	16.5%	955	5.9%
Dorchester	523	210	7.6%	733	4.5%
Brighton	537	397	14.4%	934	5.7%
Burke	659	91	3.3%	750	4.6%
Hyde Park	702	279	10.1%	981	6.0%
East Boston	708	16	0.6%	724	4.4%
Boston Hi	730	148	5.4%	878	5.4%
South Boston	811	132	4.8%	943	5.8%
English	937	251	9.1%	1,188	7.3%
West Roxbury	1,102	232	8.4%	1,334	8.2%
Madison Park	1,150	477	17.3%	1,627	10.0%
Boston Tech	1,178	28	1.0%	1,206	7.4%
Latin Academ	1,296	7	0.3%	1,303	8.0%
Boston Latin	2,228	17	0.6%	2,245	13.8%

	mainstream	atypical	total
TOTAL	13,524	2,751	16,275

(Actual enrollments as of 12/7/89)

Overall, 17% of pupils in secondary schools are assigned to programs that operate to a considerable extent separately from the regular program, but the proportion ranges from less than 1% at Boston Latin and Latin Academy to nearly half of the pupils at Charlestown and Brighton high schools. The distribution of programs raises several issues:

(1) The three examination schools, East Boston, and Snowden enroll 36.5% of all pupils but only 2.9% of those in atypical programs, while five other schools (Madison Park, Brighton, Charlestown, English and Hyde Park) enroll 34.9% of all pupils but 67.4% of those in atypical programs. In other words, certain schools serve a highly disproportionate share of the pupils who require separate programming, while other schools take on little of this responsibility.

(2) For the schools with a high proportion of pupils in atypical programs, the enrollment in the "mainstream" may be too low to staff and provide a full comprehensive high school program. This problem will be discussed further in the section on the present structure of secondary education.

The present distribution of bilingual education programs also tends to frustrate the efforts of educational reformers -- including the State Board of Education — to foster program integration in the interest of enhanced learning.

The goal of program integration is to encourage all of the teachers in a school to plan and work together so that pupils can be integrated most of the time, learning with and from each other. This should be clearly distinguished from mainstreaming if that is taken to mean simply assigning a pupil with a home language other than English (or a special educational need) to a regular class without support or adaptation of the program. Too often the de facto alternatives have been either such mainstreaming or an educationally- (and ethnically-) segregated class in which pupils are homogeneously grouped on the basis of a presumed limitation in their ability to benefit from a regular class.

The State has, in recent years, sought to reduce the tendency of bilingual and special education programs to result in an unnecessary and educationally-unsound separation of pupils, and to provide support and encouragement to school staff to

work through how their schools can be both integrated and also supportive of the diverse needs (and strengths) of their pupils. Thus, in a policy statement on the education of linguistic minority pupils adopted in June 1989, the Board stressed both that

> [w]hile many pupils will need various forms of additional support, this should so far as possible be integrated into the learning experiences which they share with pupils whose needs and strengths are different

and also that

> [t]he opportunity to continue to develop proficiency in a language other than English should be made available to linguistic minority pupils as an enrichment of their education, not as a remedial measure.

Progress has been slow, in part because it is simply easier for teachers to work with homogeneous groups, and in part because the advocates for bilingual and special needs pupils have been concerned that integration would mean a loss of services.

A similar concern for effective program integration (not to be confused with mainstreaming individual pupils) is expressed by the Massachusetts Advocacy Center in its report on tracking in Boston.

> When bilingual education is defined as a remedial program and, at the same time, implemented in a setting outside the mainstream, bilingual education students are likely to develop feelings of inadequacy and marginality in relation to others in their school. These feelings intensify as bilingual students enter the general education mainstream.

A natural reaction, on the part of bilingual program staff, to the difficulties that these students experience upon entering a mainstream for which they have been ill-prepared by years of separate instruction is to seek to shelter them by prolonging the period of enrollment in the program. As one principal has pointed out, we need to stop thinking in terms of bilingual **programs** and think instead of bilingual **services**, provided so far as possible without substantial separation within the life of the school.

In this spirit, the Massachusetts Advocacy Center report stresses that

> the restructuring of Boston schools must include a new focus on the relationship of bilingual education to the

> mainstream. . . . The image of the school as a global village can guide school-based reform toward greater heterogeneity throughout Boston's mainstream. Bilingual education can make a significant contribution to this effort, one that reduces the isolation of "different" students, welcomes diversity, and extends the best practices of the program to the entire school. . . . School-level leadership must carefully plan and manage the integration of bilingual and general educations into a coherent educational system that challenges and nurtures all students in the school. (page 93)

Controlled choice has had the immediate effect, as described above, of encouraging a number of Boston schools to begin to develop the two-way model of bilingual education, which is based upon full integration. In addition, the O'Hearn School was designated an integrated special education school (initially at kindergarten and grade 1), and several other schools are exploring how to follow suit. The great majority of bilingual and special education program sites, however, continue to be largely untouched by the effort to foster integration.

The "Lau Plan," an agreement between the Master PAC and the Boston School Committee to assure compliance with Title VI of the Federal Civil Rights Act, specifies that elementary and middle school bilingual education programs should enroll at least 80 pupils, and high school programs at least 100, to ensure sufficient staffing, sequence of instruction, and other resources. Many programs in Boston are unavoidably below these levels because of the small population of particular language groups; there are 65 Lao-speaking pupils in bilingual education programs, for example, spread over fourteen grades, and 64 Italian-speaking pupils spread over ten grades.

Other programs, however, are well above the minimum set by the Lau Plan. As the charts above show, the Chinese cluster at Charlestown High and the Vietnamese cluster at Brighton High are over two hundred pupils. There has been resistance to dividing these clusters, based upon a concern to provide a sufficient concentration of staff to offer something approaching a full high school curriculum within the bilingual program.

There are a number of large elementary and middle school programs as well, most notably the Spanish cluster at the Agassiz with 330 pupils. The chart below includes only those elementary schools with at least one bilingual education program of eighty or more pupils.

Table 3

SCHOOL	CH	FR	VT	CV	SP	KH	other	% of school	TOTAL SCHOOL
EAST ZONE									
Condon				108				15.7%	688
S Greenwood					118			25.7%	459
Holland					143			18.7%	764
Kenny		133						31.6%	421
Marshall					154			16.5%	936
Mattahunt					108		67	23.3%	750
Tynan				150				37.8%	397
NORTH ZONE									
Baldwin	107							34.3%	312
Blackstone					191			23.0%	831
Emerson				165				43.4%	380
Gardner					132			30.8%	428
Hamilton						93		37.3%	249
Hurley					154			40.8%	377
Jackson-M			227					32.6%	697
Kent	126							27.2%	464
McKay					156			36.2%	431
Otis					96		143	61.8%	387
Quincy	309							38.1%	811
Tobin					136			26.7%	510
Winship					92			29.5%	312
WEST ZONE									
Agassiz					330			40.6%	812
Ellis					130			29.8%	436
Hennigan					175			27.6%	635
Hernandez					108			30.8%	351
J Kennedy					168			32.6%	516

Actual enrollments 12/7/89

Recall the concern expressed by La Raza over how public school choice could affect linguistic minority pupils: "Many Hispanic students will have no significant choice until all schools participating in choice plans are required to provide bilingual services. These exclusionary policies severely limit choice for Hispanics and, once again, segregate Hispanics from the rest of the student population." The options offered under the Boston controlled choice assignment plan are limited for pupils who require language development support because of the practice of concentrating bilingual staff in a few schools rather than providing services in many.

In a 1985 analysis, at a time when consideration was being given to replication of the Hernandez two-way model, I noted that there were twelve elementary schools with fifty or more Hispanic pupils each -- three of them, all now in the West Zone, with over one hundred -- but without a bilingual education program. In most cases, this meant that these pupils were receiving no English-as-a-second-language (ESL) support, and that no one on the staff of the school was in a position to communicate with their parents in the language of the home. Five schools enrolled fifty or more Asian pupils who were not in bilingual programs. It was not possible to make a similar analysis of the distribution of Haitian and Cape Verdean pupils not in bilingual education programs, but there was no reason to believe that their situation was any better. As I asked in conclusion,

> Is the educational and counselling support and the home liaison strong enough in these schools for students whose first language may not be English? This has been a priority under the [Commissioner's] Operational Plan for several years, but we have not devised adequate ways of serving as advocates for these students, nor do the external advocacy groups give them as much attention as they do to TBE [bilingual education] programs.

A more rational and educationally-effective approach would be to provide native-language and ESL support in twice as many school as at present, making the bilingual program staff full members of the school team and arranging for them to work not only with limited-English proficient (LEP) pupils but also with pupils of their language group who are "mainstreamed" and often have no contact at all with staff who speak their home language -- or can communicate with their parents. These teachers would also serve as positive models for pupils who are not of their ethnic group.

It should, for example, be possible to offer Spanish bilingual education programs, including support for Hispanic pupils not classified as requiring such a program, in ten elementary schools in the West Zone, rather than limit it to the five served at present. This would address both of La Raza's concerns, about the limitation of choices for Hispanic pupils, and about the segregation of pupils in bilingual programs from other pupils.

High School Zone Superintendent Fung has proposed "that every high school should have a bilingual program, that whenever possible children should have the opportunity to attend schools in their neighborhood, that bilingual programs should

not be so large that mainstreaming becomes difficult, that parents should have choice . ." [letter to Master PAC 2/8/90]. Specifically, he suggested that Spanish and Chinese clusters be established at East Boston High, a school with less than its share of atypical classes and excess space; an increasing number of linguistic minority pupils live in that section of the city, including 99 Spanish bilingual program pupils at Charlestown High. By March the decision had been made to create a new Spanish bilingual program at East Boston, with the precise enrollment and staffing dependent upon the selections made in the first round of applications.

Fung also suggested a second site for the large Vietnamese program, and a third site for the Haitian program; these possibilities were opposed by the Master PAC, but Fung noted that they would be considered again in 1991.

A particularly difficult issue has arisen in connection with the Cape Verdean cluster. When the comprehensive high school program at Madison Park was closed, over the summer, the Cape Verdean program — except for those pupils who opted into the vocational program -- was moved to South Boston High, where it operated under extremely difficult conditions for several months. Eventually, the cluster was moved back to Madison Park for the balance of the 1989-90 school year. The Master PAC suggested that it could stay there because of the comprehensive academic courses to be offered as part of the proposed High School of the Performing Arts. Alternatively, the Burke would be an acceptable site, provided (according to the Master PAC) that the entire present enrollment of 225 pupils could be accommodated; "by dividing the program at this point," the Master PAC states, "the goals of bilingual education will never be achieved." This is a questionable statement, since the Lau Plan itself accepts a level of 100 high school pupils, and many bilingual programs operate successfully with fewer. The underlying issue is whether a bilingual cluster should seek to provide a full high school program apart from the rest of the school, or whether it should be closely integrated, providing a variety of support and enrichment services.

Zone Superintendent Fung rejected the proposal that the Cape Verdean cluster remain at Madison Park as a violation of the bilingual education law and the Lau Plan, and pointed out that a linkage with the proposed Performing Arts school would be no solution, since "a highly specialized school of 250 6-to-12-grade students cannot be the appropriate site for the integration and mainstreaming of another 250 bilingual students." Moving the entire cluster to the Burke would be impossible; in view of the limited capacity of that school,

at most 125 seats would be available. "To place the entire Cape Verdean program at that site," he wrote, "will lead to extreme overcrowding and will in effect destroy the Burke program" [memo of 2/7/90]. In mid-March it seemed most likely that a compromise would be reached that would leave juniors and seniors in the Cape Verdean program at Madison Park, while starting a cluster at the Burke.

As this example indicates, the Master PAC has resisted the establishment of more bilingual clusters if that would require that each be smaller than at present. In an official statement on plans for 1990-91, the organization stressed that "[w]e want to facilitate the concentration of resources, e.g. guidance counselors, classes for semi-literate students, resource rooms, etc. and to maximize course offerings within the bilingual program. Each site should plan on a minimum enrollment of two hundred (200) students . .. . . The argument that the larger the bilingual program is the less opportunities for mainstreaming there will be is of little importance to us" [letter to Supt. Wilson, 2/5/90].

In the negotiations over the 1989 pilot controlled choice plan, the need for a more rational and educationally-sound approach to the size and location of bilingual programs -- and their linkage with regular education -- was raised repeatedly by the State, and the School Department agreed that it would be on the agenda for the 1990 planning process. It has not proved practical to have a full-scale discussion this year, and we agree with Boston's bilingual education director that it is possible to create new integrated bilingual programs only to the extent that a readiness exists (or can be created) in the target schools. This has been identified as a model for FY 91 funding (in addition to the two-way bilingual model), and it will be a priority for the State's work with the Boston Public Schools and the the Master PAC over the next year. This is an area of important unfinished business.

HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATIONAL PLANNING

Need for Fundamental Change

The Student Assignment Plan approved by the School Committee in February 1989 did not include Boston's high schools, since, in the judgment of the authors, a thorough study was needed of curriculum and other issues; they noted that "[t]he high school situation in Boston is in crisis and

needs immediate and careful attention."

In a February 7, 1989 memorandum to the Committee Willie and Alves recommended that

> a Commission Concerning Secondary School Issues should be established during the first week of March 1989. The findings and comprehensive recommendations of the Commission will be submitted to the Superintendent and School Committee by September 1, 1989.

On the same date the Committee unanimously approved such a commission. Discussion of planning for secondary education did not begin seriously, however, until half a year later, when School Committee member Rosina Bowman took the initiative to obtain approval of a subcommittee to develop recommendations.

The need for fundamental decisions about secondary education in Boston has long been obvious. The State called repeatedly for a comprehensive secondary plan in its recommendations to the Federal District Court in the early eighties, and indeed even earlier the system had been ordered to develop such a plan but failed to do so. In a report to the State Board on strategies for equity in secondary education, in January 1988, I pointed out that

> Secondary education in Massachusetts does not serve all students equally well. Urban, poor, and minority students are more likely to drop out of school before graduation and less likely to master skills and knowledge essential to full participation, as adults, in our society, economy, and political order. Female students are less likely than their male classmates to participate in high-payoff vocational programs.
>
> Our system does not, in general, employ overt selection of students for different types of schools on the basis of judgments about their potential, as do some European education systems. The comprehensive high school is the norm in Massachusetts, and vocational/technical schools have traditionally been selective. In recent years the familiar systems of 'tracking' have generally been dismantled as well.
>
> These changes -- made in the name of equal educational opportunity -- have not resulted in a truly common education, in which all students acquire the essential competencies in a context that enhances their mutual respect and thus their ability to be future citizens of a pluralistic democracy.

This report describes three possible responses to this sad reality. The first is to de-emphasize testing and standards, on the basis of their powerfully negative effects on poor and minority children for whose exclusion from opportunities they serve as a pretext. The report concludes that critiques of academic standards, while well-meaning, have tended in practice to result in low expectations and an unchallenging education for these very students.

The second possible response is to raise academic standards and increase the amount of educational selection in order to provide highly demanding programs, while placing major emphasis upon supplemental support for able students whose background makes them less prepared to meet such challenges. An example would be the recent effort to increase the number of black and Hispanic students who are able to benefit from Boston Latin School and Latin Academy. The report concludes that such strategies, absent more basic changes, are unlikely to overcome the effects of social class and provide a first-rate education for every student.

The third possible response — and the one we recommend — is to address the structure of secondary education in ways that would create more effective schools. There is no single formula that will make this happen; indeed a primary recommendation is that more diversity of approach (with accountability for results) be encouraged to elicit the problem-solving energy in each school. Some of the elements might include:

a. defining clearly -- and broadly -- the common skills and knowledge that all students are expected to master, whether they will be going on to higher education or to immediate employment, and awarding certificates upon demonstration of such mastery;

b. allowing and helping each school to work out its own distinctive strategy to develop these competencies in every student, with clear and measurable objectives and provision for regular accountability for results;

c. breaking the age/grade lock-step by stressing the skills and knowledge to be mastered at each level, and providing a diversity of ways to develop and to demonstrate mastery at each level, including that of certification;

d. fostering networks of effective secondary schools, each

with a distinctive profile but sharing a commitment to equity and accountability, and giving such networks a key role in the training of administrators and teachers;

e. enriching the mix of staff in secondary schools with individuals selected for their ability to relate effectively to poor and minority students, and to serve as models of successful participation in our society;

f. applying to the education of all students some of the methods used effectively in vocational education: working together on projects, extended blocks of time devoted to a single task, teachers as leaders of a work-team, emphasis on demonstrated competencies, and use of academic skills to respond to 'real world' needs;

g. organizing secondary schools in cross-age groups of no more than 300 students (not 'houses' of a thousand or more for purely administrative convenience), each with a coherent mission and a staff committed to working together, in order to increase the possibility of stable student/adult relationships and parent support and involvement;

h. promoting the development of self-discipline, responsibility and civic virtue as a primary task to be undertaken within these groups and essential to all other learning, rather than as a remedial problem when individual students become disruptive;

i. seeking to reduce the number of students who drop out of school (as well as those who drop out psychologically while remaining present physically) by making the school more rather than less challenging and providing frequent experience of competence -- social as well as intellectual -- at all levels;

j. stressing varied approaches to strengthen language skills through using them across the entire curriculum, in contexts relevant to students, and in extra-curricular activities;

k. providing more choice of the style in which to learn, with particular stress on a variety of learning activities that develop critical thinking and moral judgment, together with significantly less choice about whether to take learning seriously;

l. offering a variety of opportunities for specialised training and advanced study (including enrollment in college courses) after the common competencies have been

mastered; and

m. fostering mutual respect and social integration (the historic mission of the common school) through working together on tasks that require cooperation and a diversity of skills.

This third approach has more promise than either of the others, and is more consistent with the Board of Education's Goals. Unlike the first, it makes no apologies for high standards and the expectation that all students will master a common body of skills and knowledge. Unlike the second, it does not place the responsibility for adaptation solely on the student, or persist in defining as failures those youth for whom the present structure of secondary schooling is an alienating experience.

Most important, though, it is consistent with the real mission of the common school, as expressed by Horace Mann, to educate rather than simply to instruct, to develop qualities of heart as well as mind and hand.

It calls for the creation of educational settings in which students learn together, in close association with a stable though diverse team of adults who are given scope to exercise their full professional and human skills.

It assumes that a primary function of the school is to develop the ability to cooperate on the basis of mutual respect.

It sets high expectations for the learning of every student -- including cognitive skills and familiarity with the essential elements of our past and our present -- but in a way that puts the spotlight on competency acquired rather than on the threat of failure.

If schools are to be encouraged to educate students in this broader sense, there must be room for diversity of approach and for student, parent and teacher choice among educational settings (schools or parts of schools) that differ in their approach to matters on which it is unnecessary and inappropriate to impose uniformity.

Democracy is founded upon respect for such diversity.

Four principles are basic to reform of secondary education:

First, that students should receive a common education,

without selection, until they have mastered what is essential for citizenship.

Second, that what is essential for every student should be defined modestly, leaving ample room for diversity in approach and in flavor.

Third, that such a common education can best be provided in educational settings that are human-scale, coherent, and freely-chosen, not in institutions whose monolithic appearance conceals a fragmentation of purpose and of community.

Fourth, that educational equity can be achieved only through effective schools, informed by a generous understanding of the purposes of education.

State staff, especially Dan French and Mimi Jones, had been working with high schools in Boston to encourage fundamental restructuring in lieu of a patchwork of supplemental programs. They urged strongly that a new assignment plan not go forward without addressing the need to make secondary education effective for all.

After the School Committee, on December 12th, voted a high school assignment plan, I wrote to Superintendent Wilson that "[w]e are not prepared to recommend approval of the secondary plan until it is clear how the necessary educational elements will be put in place" [12/18/89]. In a series of meetings held by Mrs. Bowman of the School Committee, Zone Superintendent Michael Fung, and others, the range of reforms needed became more and more clear, though the effort continued to be hampered by divided responsibility.

The Present Structure of Secondary Education

There have been five categories of high schools in Boston. Three of the schools admit pupils on the basis of competitive examination: Boston Latin and Latin Academy at the seventh and ninth grades, and Boston Technical at the ninth. These schools are subject to Court orders designed to assure a racially-mixed enrollment, though the two Latins enroll a substantially higher proportion of white pupils than the city average -- the majority out of non-public elementary schools.

Two schools could be called career-oriented. Madison Park, until this year a city-wide magnet high school, is now merged with the Humphrey Occupational Resource Center and provides a vocational education program (while continuing to serve as

umbrella for the Hayes Music Division, discussed below). Boston High offers a work-study program combining academics and job placement.

The third category has now shrunk to two: English and Snowden. These (together with the Umana -- closed in August -- and Madison Park) have been city-wide comprehensive high schools attracting pupils on a voluntary basis.

Eight other schools (nine until the closing of Jamaica Plain last August) have enrolled pupils from geographical districts, without the possibility of recruiting from outside those districts. The basic skills test results, the drop-out rates, and the high proportion of pupils enrolled in atypical programs (see tables 1 & 2 on pages 46-47) suggest that these schools are not presently able to offer a full comprehensive high school program.

In a 1987 report, the Citywide Educational Coalition concluded that remediation was the norm rather than the exception in Boston's district high schools. This is dramatically illustrated in the recent Massachusetts Advocacy Center report. The proportion of pupils at grade level in mathematics at the non-exam high schools last byear started at a low 26.2 percent in grade nine and droped to 16.8 percent in grade 12.

A final category of secondary education consists of several programs for special needs pupils, including the Tileston program now at the Mackey facility; these programs, though they deserve close attention, will not be discussed further in this report since they have not been included in the desegregation planning.

Under the new high school assignment plan, the eight former district high schools are expected to attract pupils city-wide on the basis of their educational distinctiveness and quality. As the tables below demonstrate, the former district schools (*) vary considerably in staffing for a comprehensive high school program; only West Roxbury has a vocational education cluster (in agriculture).

Table 4

High School Teachers of Math 11/29/89

HIGH SCHOOL	REG ED PUPILS	MATH TEACHERS	P/P
English	937	14	67
Snowden	462	6	77

	Boston Hi	730	8	91
	Boston Tech	1,178	13	91
*	Dorchester	523	5	105
*	Brighton	537	5	107
	Boston Latin	2,228	19	117
	Latin Academy	1,296	11	118
*	Charlestown	501	4	125
*	Burke	659	5	132
*	South Boston	811	6	135
*	Hyde Park	702	5	140
	Madison Park	1,150	8	144
*	West Roxbury	1,102	7	157
*	East Boston	708	4	177
	TOTAL	13,524	120	113

Table 5

High School Teachers of Science 11/29/89

	HIGH SCHOOL	REG ED PUPILS	SCIENCE TEACHERS	P/P
	Boston Tech	1,178	13	91
	English	937	8	117
	Boston Hi	730	6	122
*	Burke	659	5	132
*	Brighton	537	4	134
*	West Roxbury	1,102	8	138
*	Hyde Park	702	5	140
	Latin Academy	1,296	9	144
	Snowden	462	3	154
*	South Boston	811	5	162
*	Charlestown	501	3	167
*	Dorchester	523	3	174
*	East Boston	708	4	177
	Boston Latin	2,228	12	186
	Madison Park	1,150	6	192
	TOTAL	13,524	94	144

Table 6

High School Teachers of Languages 11/29/89

HIGH SCHOOL	REG ED PUPILS	LANGUAGE TEACHERS	P/P
Boston Latin	2,228	33	68
Latin Academ	1,296	18	72

	Snowden	462	5	92
	English	937	4	234
*	East Boston	708	3	236
*	Brighton	537	2	269
*	Burke	659	2	330
*	West Roxbury	1,102	3	367
	Boston Tech	1,178	3	393
*	Charlestown	501	1	501
*	Dorchester	523	1	523
	Madison Park	1,150	2	575
*	Hyde Park	702	1	702
	Boston Hi	730	1	730
*	South Boston	811	1	811
	TOTAL	13,524	80	169

The results of this staffing pattern are illustrated in the Massachusetts Advocacy Center report. The foreign language and mathematics course offerings for the various high schools are presented in a single table, with marked disparities, with the conclusion that "[t]hese variations in staff allocation must inevitably translate into differences in access to knowledge" (pages 44-45).

The Bowman subcommittee has met frequently over the past six months to grapple with formulating a strategy that would both encourage planning and improvement efforts in individual high schools and also give some coherence to the overall secondary offerings of the school system. I was asked to present the State's goals for the process at a January meeting; according to the minutes I argued that

> The high school student assignment plan should not go forward without issues of fundamental change being addressed. The following questions should be considered: What is high school all about? How should a high school operate? What is basic competency? What is the goal of restructuring and how should it take place? What should be done about the exam schools? At what grade level should students be asked to make decisions regarding their future?

This position was consistent with that of the High School Zone Council, which had asked Zone Superintendent Fung to prepare an evaluation of high school education in the city and a strategy providing

> a plan and timeline for a major reduction in the dropout rate, that includes special initiatives for student groups

with the highest school leaving rates . .

a plan for improving the basic skills of high school students, utilizing all available resources, including Chapter I

a framework for planning curricular programs and offerings across the high schools, with mechanisms developed so that students in all high schools might have access to these programs

a structure and process to guide school-based planning that takes into account [this] city-wide framework

a plan for integrating improved and expanded vocational and technical education into the overall high school program for all students

a plan for new programs (eg. a night school, increased work-study programs, new alternative schools, etc) . . .

A similar agenda was proposed by Paula Georges of the Citywide Educational Coalition:

> Up-grading and improvement of all high schools must be at the center of the assignment plan. All disciplinary practices which push students out of school should be re-examined and changed. Top priority must be given to extablishing a positive school climate and culture.
>
> Every high school should begin a school-based evaluation and planning process to set in motion a move away from a remedial, compensatory curriculum to an innovative competency-based one which includes a solid academic core in language arts, social studies, foreign language, mathematics and science. Multi-modal instruction in basic skills must be taught in the context of a solid academic curriculum with an emphasis on critical thinking skills. [11/27/89]

The need for fundamental restructuring of secondary education, school by school, was also stressed in an agreement on reducing the drop-out rate of Hispanic students, worked out by a coalition of community groups and accepted by Superintendent Wilson, and by the State's well-received publications on drop-out prevention.

There was thus something like a consensus among critics of the present situation of secondary education in Boston, and a sense of urgency that the needs could no longer be met with supplemental programs. In language approved by the State

Board on March 27th 1990, an acceptable high school plan

> must be adopted and implemented by a date certain. It must address such issues as vocational and transitional bilingual education, the scope of and access of students to magnet themes at citywide high schools, and the interaction of East Boston High School and the exam schools with the remaining citywide high schools.

The Federal Magnet Project

At the heart of the controlled choice model of desegregation, as we have noted above, is a commitment to making schools distinctively excellent so that real choices are available. Many hope that this will also help schools to respond more effectively to the diverse needs and interests of pupils, especially at the secondary level.

On the other hand, proponents of educational equity have expressed the concern that diversity and choice, again especially at the secondary level, will produce new forms of inequity, an "improved sorting machine." For example, a recent British report by HM Inspectors found that "New York City's 'pecking order' of specialized high schools, with others across the city offering special programmes, education options, enrichment courses or alternatives, means that able and talented students are siphoned off from their local schools," leaving the latter even more deprived. Thus these centers of excellence "tend to increase the gap between best and worst" (The Times Educational Supplement 2/23/90).

The State Board, in approving school choice plans for more than a dozen Massachusetts cities, has always insisted that these plans take into account the needs of **all** pupils; simply "making the numbers come out right" at the expense of comprehensive planning for equity has not been acceptable.

Boston has a long history of State-funded magnet schools but is in the process of moving on to the next stage of parent choice for desegregation, controlled choice, in which every school becomes a "magnet," in part because of concerns with the elitist effect of a system under which some schools were magnets and others were not. In recent years, the State has been successfully encouraging urban school systems to move beyond the magnet school approach.

As planning began, in Boston, to create sufficient diversity and excellence in all of the high schools that previously had

been assigned pupils automatically on the basis of their residence, it became of critical importance to assure that the results were consistent with the principles that lie behind controlled choice. Every choice of assignment should ideally be made for an educational reason, with no "residual" schools or programs to which those pupils are assigned for whom an unfocused general education is presumed to be sufficient.

After several unsuccessful applications, the Boston Public Schools were successful in obtaining a three-year magnet school grant of $2.6 million from the U.S. Department of Education, starting with a planning year in 1989-90. This program, unlike most federal grants, is approved and administered directly from Washington, with no involvement by the State. When I became aware, through the first open meetings on high school planning, in October 1989, that Boston was about to establish a complex system of magnet programs within its high schools, I expressed concern about its potential for excluding in particular special needs and bilingual pupils, and for leaving the education provided to the non-magnet pupils even more impoverished than at present.

In particular, I pressed for whether the planning effort was intended to create "schools-within-schools" for a selected (or self-selected) minority of pupils, or to help each school as a whole to develop focus and identity. Experience monitoring the Chicago desegregation plan suggested that schools-within-schools can have a demoralizing effect on the schools that house them. As I wrote to School Committee member Rosina Bowman,

> Planned diversity among schools, coupled with parent/student choice, can give a powerful impetus to school improvement.
>
> Breaking secondary schools up into smaller units can also contribute to more effective. This was recommended by our 1988 report Equity in Secondary Education (enclosed).
>
> Both of the elements of the proposed plan, while potentially positive, are likely to have a negative effect if not designed correctly. Unplanned diversity among schools often amounts to uneven quality and unequal opportunity. Magnet programs within schools that otherwise remain unchanged can result in a new form of tracking that leaves the excluded students even more poorly served than before. . . .
>
> My recommendation is that the School Committee consider the following alternatives. Either,

(a) designated themes that will permeate the entire curriculum of a school, including that of any bilingual and special education programs, while allowing for different degrees and forms of involvement in the more specialized aspects of the program. . . Or,

(b) accommodate several different theme schools within a single school building (as in East Harlem), taking care that there is no group of residual students whose program has no more focus than compensatory education.

The students who most need the focus and the work-relatedness that a theme can offer are unfortunately those most likely to end up in the 'general program' as the plan was outlined to us on November 2nd. I am suggesting that there should be no unfocused general program--that all students deserve a secondary education with a clearly-defined mission. [11/6/89]

Through discussions involving High School Zone Superintendent Fung and a number of the headmasters, it was decided that the enrollment of "schools-within-schools" would not be fixed; as few or as many of the pupils assigned to each high school would participate in the magnet theme as chose to do so. In effect, then, the whole school would be at least potentially marked by the theme, though curriculum planning appeared to focus upon the development of a handful of thematic courses and not upon how all of the instruction could incorporate elements of the theme.

During 1989 Boston's magnet school staff, headed by Stanley Swartz and assisted by consultant Phale Hale, met with high school headmasters in a process of selecting the magnet themes for each school. A survey of parents and pupils "to identify magnet themes that will draw a full complement of regular day students" was carried out in November 1989; it revealed little enthusiasm for most of the proposed themes. This result presumably reflects less a lack of **potential** for properly-developed thematic secondary education than the fact that the themes were at that point no more than names.

There were, during this period, no contacts with the State magnet school effort (considered the most effective in the nation) nor -- so far as we are aware -- with other Massachusetts cities implementing magnet schools.

Controversy arose over the designation of themes, with staff of some high schools claiming that they had not been consulted or that their choice of emphasis was not reflected in the allocation of themes. Dorchester High School, in

particular, objected -- successfully -- because it was initially not allowed to maintain the health careers theme that had already been in operation for several years. Whereas the early description of Dorchester's program in human services listed "law enforcement, legal services, education politics [either a comma is missing or this is an acknowledgement of a favorite Boston activity!], civil service, and community affairs," the brochure distributed in early March listed "health, education, law/government and public service."

The eventual list of themes, as of the material distributed to parents in March, included

Brighton High	health careers
Burke High	computer technology
Charlestown High	humanities
Dorchester High	human services
East Boston High	travel, tourism, hotel management
Hyde Park High	banking and finance
South Boston High	marine and environmental sciences
West Roxbury	media and communications

These themes were to be available only for ninth and tenth grades in 1990-91, with the assumption that this would permit the school staff more time to develop the specialized courses needed for eleventh and twelfth graders. For each of these schools, the applicant may choose between the magnet theme and the regular academic program.

The federal magnet project has been plagued with changes of course as different priorities have competed for shares of the funding, and many observers believe it has been too much a Central Office effort in a period when the initiative for educational improvement was shifting to the zones. While the proposal called for three project directors assigned to zone offices, these positions have in fact been assigned to system-wide responsibilities ("planning for high school magnet themes, middle school high technology programs and the professional development centers") working out of the magnet office. Only $137,000 of the $2.6 million grant in the first year was committed to preparing to implement the high school magnet themes, even though these would absorb nearly $1 million to implement in 1990-91 -- and serve as the basis for choices among high schools in March 1990.

Since the school system was committed to implementing controlled choice at the secondary level for 1990-91, it was essential that the school-level planning reach a stage of specificity before choices were made that would allow parents and pupils know what they would be getting at each school.

Thus the magnet school plan called for developing the "sequence of courses to be offered in each magnet school" by November 1989, and the curriculum objectives for these courses by April. Repeated requests, from the parties to the 90-day process, for the planning schedule and its results produced no specific information; the parent information materials distributed were studiously vague.

As if the other uncertainties were not enough to hamper this process, there was continuing controversy over the allocation of federal magnet funds to various high schools for 1990-91. In November, West Roxbury High was to receive up to $300,000 to develop its media theme, with Burke and the School for the Arts reciving similar amounts, while other schools received much less; these amounts were set without imput from the zone office or the schools, leading to lack of commitment to the magnet development process. Plaintiffs pointed out that the justification for these federal funds was the need to achieve desegregated enrollments, no problem for West Roxbury but a serious challenge for several other high schools. In March allocations were modified to support program development at all of the former district high schools.

It was still not clear, at this point in the process, to what extent and in what ways the magnet themes would be career-oriented; the system-wide vocational advisory committee expressed serious misgivings about how the magnet themes might detract from the ability of the Madison Park/Humphrey Occupational Resource Center to attract applicants to its programs in banking, nursing, and other duplicated areas. The school system continues to lack an overall strategy for career-oriented education (see discussion below).

An even more serious problem is the lack of linkage between the magnet themes and the fundamental restructuring essential to secondary education in Boston (see discussion below).

High School of the Arts

The Madison Park complex, built in the seventies, includes a building designed for music programs and now called the Roland Hayes Division of Music of Madison Park High School. This school-within-a-school offers a dance program as well as a variety of music programs to over three hundred pupils, including some who are enrolled at Boston Technical in the same complex, and has in the past also offered a theater and media program.

English High has for a number of years offered a program in

the visual arts -- severely affected by the recent excessing of four art teachers from its faculty — as part of the basis for its attractiveness as a city-wide magnet school.

A plan was included in Boston's application for federal magnet school funding to create a School for the Arts. This proposal, which enjoyed strong support from the Boston Arts community, would transform the Hayes facility into a separate school of the arts for 250 pupils, serving grades 6-12 and admitting pupils on the basis of an audition. According to Superintendent Wilson in January 1990, this would be "a free standing program and interaction with the other schools will be minimal." Programs would include theater, dance, music (instrumental and vocal) and visual arts.

The Hayes faculty objected that they had not been consulted by those planning the new school, and advanced their own, somewhat different proposal for a 500-600 pupil school. Admission to the middle school component, they recommended, should be on the basis of potential, interest and recommendation from teachers, with interviews but without auditions.

Robert Winfrey, the Hayes administrator, stressed that the invitation to participate in an arts-oriented program should be extended to all pupils, including the handicapped and those of limited proficiency in English, rather than limited to those prepared to audition; the Hayes Division had always accepted whatever pupils happened to be assigned and worked with them to explore their abilities and interests. A low-key interview encouraging the applicant to explain why he or she wanted to be in the Arts School should be the only screening device.

The proposal for a School for the Arts received strong support from Superintendent Wilson, who had earmarked $300,000 of the federal magnet school planning grant for this project, to pay for an Arts Director and fourteen part-time instructors drawn from Boston's arts community. This proposed introduction of new participants from outside the system may go at least part-way to explain the resistance of the Hayes faculty and their supporters. An undoubted strength of the magnet school proposal was its potential for enlisting energies and resources from outside the system; a weakness was its stress upon selection of the most talented young people (as fifth graders!) for a highly specialised program serving admitting less than forty pupils a year (250 capacity divided by seven grades 6-12).

Critics questioned the early selection implicit in the middle school component, and suggested that this would undermine the

existing performing arts program at the Tobin k-8 school, and the efforts of the Cleveland and other middle schools to develop such components. They also accused the magnet school proposal as being essentially elitist, and likely to devalue arts education in other schools. By February 1990, Superintendent Wilson agreed to modify the proposal to include a grades 9-12 structure and to eliminate the audition requirement.

The School Committee's subcommittee on high school planning, chaired by Rosina Bowman, devoted a number of meetings to the School for the Arts proposal, without being able to resolve all of the objections raised. The parent information material on high school options included the proposed school, and it was prominently featured in a brochure on "magnet school options" inserted into the Sunday newspapers in early March, but did not obtain School Committee approval on March 13 and thus was omitted from the options offered on the high school application. The Hayes Division was, as usual, included as a separate option on the application

The Bowman subcommittee is to submit recommendations for the future of the High School of the Arts to the School Committee by May 1st, for possible implementation in September 1991.

Zone Restructuring Proposals

While the Magnet School office has been identifying themes and (presumably, though no evidence has yet been provided) encouraging program and curriculum development at eight or more of the high schools, the Zone Superintendent and Zone Improvement Council have been wrestling with more basic questions of the scope and organization of secondary education, and encouraging the same schools to volunteer to restructure in order to support and challenge more effectively.

Zone Superintendent Fung was the primary author of the student assignment plan for the high schools, and much of his efforts have been devoted to preparing for the orderly implementation of system-wide choice. In particular, the "referendum" of the first round of high school applications is likely to require complex decisions about staffing levels to respand to student demand. This year there are twenty-one different options offered to the student entering ninth grade, not counting the exam schools or bilingual and special education assignments; last year a student chose between her district high school and perhaps five other options.

Meanwhile, significant progress has been made on one aspect of planning for high school restructuring. Fung has proposed a model that is primarily oriented toward the first two years of high school, with a strong emphasis upon nurturing of students and assuring their mastery of basic skills. The ninth and tenth grades would be divided into units made up of between 90 and 120 students, each with a team of teachers committed to serving as mentors; this would be preceded by reaching out to eighth graders and preparatory programs the summer before their entry into ninth grade. In the second half of tenth grade, those students who had mastered the common skills would explore various specialties, while those who had not would receive intensive tutoring. The eleventh and twelfth grades would be made up of specialized strands, and these would be linked with post-secondary programs and work experience.

The structure proposed is consistent with many recommendations for high school reform, and the State has committed Chapter 636 funds to the planning process and staff development activities that will be necessary in the schools that choose to pilot this model in 1990-91.

The limitation of this plan is that it does not yet address the content of secondary education -- who should learn what? how should distinctive magnet themes be balanced against what every student should learn? -- not does it call into question the way that most instruction is now provided. The linkage between bilingual education and this model has not been worked through; as high schools become more distinctive, how to assure that language minority pupils will have access to a broad range of contents and learning styles?

Occupational Education

Scarcely mentioned in the secondary planning efforts this year has been the need to strengthen career exploratory and occupational education system-wide. The system is not in compliance with the court-ordered Unified Plan for Vocational/Occupational Education, and participation in career-oriented programs is far below what would be appropriate in a school system of Boston's size.

For the past few years, occupational education in Boston has been equated with the programs offered by the Humphrey Occupational Resource Center, and the concerns of School Department and State alike have centered on how to bring those programs into compliance with State requirements and how to persuade more students to volunteer to participate.

The embarrassing short-fall in applications to the Humphrey Center was long (inaccurately) attributed to the requirements of the desegregation orders, or to discouragement by high school guidance counsellors. Now that the Humphrey Center has been merged with Madison Park as a grades 9-12 vocational/technical school, the burden will be upon the staff of the school to persuade eighth graders that they offer a highly desirable educational program.

Filling up Madison Park should not be achieved through adding middle school grades or through locating city-wide offices and programs unrelated to the educational mission of the school. Boston needs a first-rate vocational/technical school for up to 2,500 day students, and as many more attending afternnon and evening sessions.

Filling up Madison Park should also not be achieved through seeking to prevent other high schools from offering career-oriented occupational programs. It is the position of the State that so-called Chapter 74 vocational education programs, providing intensive hands-on as well as related academic learning, should for the forseeable future be located only at Madison Park (with the exception of the agriculture program at West Roxbury), but every high school should be encouraged to offer less-intensive occupational education programs with work-site experiences and the chance to develop skills that will lead to employment.

Boston's high school student assignment plan will not be complete until it includes specific provisions for the improvement and extension of vocational and occupational education.

SUMMARY

School improvement was the brightest promise of Boston's controlled choice plan, but very little -- with a few bright exceptions -- has been accomplished to date.

Desegregation compliance will not be secure until hard decisions have been made about secondary and bilingual education, and until zone superintendents, zone councils, school staff and school improvement councils have been empowered to respond to what parents are telling them by the school choices they make.